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# FAITHS THAT HEALED

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RALPH H. MAJOR

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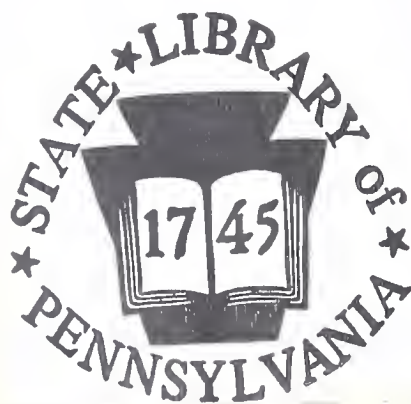
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FAITHS  
THAT HEALED





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*The Basilica and the Grotto at Lourdes*

# FAITHS THAT HEALED

By RALPH H. MAJOR, M.D.

AUTHOR OF *Disease and Destiny*

ILLUSTRATED



D. APPLETON-CENTURY COMPANY

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## FOREWORD

FROM the earliest times physicians have been priests. In the belief of primitive peoples man should live forever—barring sudden death in battle or from accident. Thus, disease and death were regarded by them as the work of evil spirits who could be routed only by the ministrations of the priests. Even in later, more civilized times, the Greeks believed that disease was sent down upon man by the angry gods, and only the rites of the priest could appease them.

Centuries later disease and healing loom large in the early history of the Christian Church. The twelve disciples were sent out "to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick." They were given "power and authority over all devils, and to cure the sick." St. Luke, the author of the third Gospel, was the "beloved physician" of the Apostle Paul. The Gospel of St. Luke is noteworthy for its qualities of tenderness and sympathy and its frequent reference to disease.

This close relationship between faith and healing, stressed by the founders of the Church, endures.

Numerous sects have arisen whose *raison d'être* is the healing of mental and physical disease. Disease and healing have profoundly influenced the dogma, ritual and discipline of the Church. Some of the fairest pages in the history of human kindness and charity have been written by devoted priests and sisters of the Church. Some of the blackest pages, likewise, by pious, but misguided zealots who mistook disease for the Devil.



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FAITHS  
THAT HEALED



## *Chapter I*

### ÆSCULAPIUS AT EPIDAUROS

ON a bright sunny day nearly two thousand years ago, a Greek sailing-vessel crossed the Saronic Gulf. With its white sails bellied forward in the breeze, it seemed more like a bird than a vessel as it skimmed across the deep blue waters. A group of passengers stood on deck, peering eagerly toward the coast of Argolus as they came nearer and nearer. From the distance, it seemed at first a rugged, barren, and inhospitable mass of rocks, but as they drew nearer, the landscape seemed to soften as the outlines of groves, of fertile fields, and of neat white houses became more distinct.

The passengers, their hands shading their eyes, were soon scanning what at first looked like a large white patch on the green shore. As they drew nearer, however, they saw that it was a collection of houses, intersected by narrow streets with here and there a group of green trees. "Epidauros" murmured the group.

One of the passengers, a young man in his thirties, surveyed the shore-line with unusual interest.

"I have observed," he remarked, "since coming to Greece, that the sun so dazzles the eyes, they are unable to take in the beauties of the landscape.

"Just now, because of the sun's brilliance, the landscape seems clear and bright, but rather devoid of color. Hold your hands in such a way that you make a small tube with your thumb and fingers, place them before your eyes as you would two rolls of paper and then look at the scene. What a remarkable combination of colors strike your eyes—blue, green, red, violet—colors that you did not know were there."

The others followed his example. Exclamations of surprise and delight burst from their lips.

"I have observed a similar thing with the stars. How much brighter and more colorful they appear on a dark night than on one when the moon is shining."

"Who are you?" asked a middle-aged man standing near him. "An astrologer, a soothsayer?"

"No, my friend," answered the young man, "I am Marcus Julius Apellas, a Roman gentleman from Idria, in the province of Mylasa. I am neither an astrologer nor a soothsayer, but a poor ailing soul seeking health. My digestion has long been a source of woe, and I knew not what to do until the god Asklepios, whom the Romans call Æsculapius, appeared to me in a dream, and commanded me to go to Epidaurus and be healed."



"Then we are all on the same mission. Now I have had trouble with my eyes—"

But he did not complete his sentence. The boat was pulled to the shore by eager hands on the dock, and the passengers hurried to land.

A small group of people were gathered on the shore, watching with idle curiosity. The little town of Epidaurus was too accustomed to pilgrims to show excitement when a new group arrived.

The town of Epidaurus owed its importance to the fact that it was the port of embarkation for pilgrims going to the famous Hieron, or sacred precinct of Asklepios, which was situated about eight miles inland. The Hieron was reached by the Sacred Road which wound gently up from the sea and thence across the broad plain. The little group of passengers were soon supplied with donkeys and rode up out of the town and upon the plains beyond. At first they rode in silence, looking out dreamily over the landscape and buried in their thoughts. Presently the young Roman spoke:

"I surely hope the god will cure my ailments," he remarked, addressing a Greek who rode by his side. "I have come a long distance and in response to a dream. The god appeared to me while I slept and said, 'Thou art sick. The gods send disease down to mortals and they can also take it away. Go to Epidaurus and be healed.' Maybe the god can heal this intestinal trouble of mine."

"My home," answered the Greek, an old man with

white hair, gentle eyes, and pale, almost translucent skin, "is in Megara, and I came here only after seeking cure in many places for my joint trouble. I have consulted the best physicians in Athens without avail, and finally was on the point of going to the Asklepios in Athens when a friend advised me to go to the chief temple of the cult at Epidaurus. But I have not much faith. A philosopher in Athens told me one day that all of this cult of Asklepios is superstition. He said the great Hippocrates taught that the gods did not send diseases down upon men, but that men brought them upon themselves. How then could the gods remove disease if they had never caused it? This same philosopher, who is also a physician, said he doubted that Asklepios was ever a god. His two sons, Podileiros and Machaon, were not gods but men, surgeons who served in the Greek army at the siege of Troy. According to Homer, they bound up the wounds of the soldiers and treated the sick. The philosopher also said that Asklepios was a surgeon who practised in Thessaly and was killed one day by a thunderbolt. Superstition then wove the story that he was killed by Zeus at the request of Pluto for depopulating Hades, and that Zeus later suffered remorse and created him a god."

"What nonsense," answered the young Roman heatedly, "or rather, what impiety. In the good old days any one who uttered such blasphemous thoughts would have been severely punished. But in these days of ferment and dissolution, even the gods may

be insulted with impunity. How different things once were, especially in Greece. How men have changed!"

"I am not so sure they have changed," answered the old man. "You remember that Aristeides was banished from Athens because he was just, and Socrates drank the hemlock on the absurd charge that he had corrupted the youth of Athens. And yet, now, one of the noblest schools of philosophy teaches 'back to Socrates.'"

"Aha," remarked the youth, "I see you are a Stoic."

"No," replied the other, gently, "I am a follower of Epicurus."

"Heavens," answered the young man, "You! Who would have thought it! Eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die. You an Epicurean!"

"You have listened not to Epicurus, but to his traducers. Nothing is created out of nothing and nothing passes into nothing. The universe consists of bodies and of space. The existence of bodies is determined by sensation. The criterion for good is sensation; beauty and virtue alone produce pleasure. The two great disturbing ideas in human life are the fear of the gods and the fear of death."

The young Roman, who had listened approvingly at first, shook his head in violent dissent at the last words.

"In my country," he remarked, "we have a saying that where there are three physicians, there are two

atheists. From what I heard at Athens, I should say that where there are three philosophers, there are three atheists. Rome has conquered Athens because Rome followed her gods and their priests, while Athens listened to her philosophers."

The young man, obviously annoyed, whipped up his donkey, and came up beside two other pilgrims, thinking to engage them in conversation. He listened for a few minutes to a spirited discussion about olives and sheep, and then rode off to himself, staring somewhat moodily out over the rocky hills. As he rode for several hours in silence, he thought back over the conversation with the Greek philosopher. "How can a man with so little faith expect Asklepios to heal him," he mused.

Presently, a suppressed murmur arose from several of the group. On either side of the road there were magnificent tombs of marble, many of them covered with exquisitely carved figures. Apellas would have dismounted and studied these tombs at his leisure, but he was seized with a strange excitement. They were approaching the Hieron, or Sacred Precinct, of Asklepios. He whipped up his donkey and, in a short time, had passed through a large gate, and was within the Hieron.

The other pilgrims arrived at almost the same time. All dismounted and gave their donkeys to boys who were waiting to take them back to the town. A tall young acolyte dressed in white robes approached them with uplifted arms.

"Welcome, O travelers, to the sacred precincts of Asklepios. The gods who send trouble and disease to men can also take them away. Follow me."

The pilgrims followed on foot. On a vast plain before them stood a group of magnificent marble buildings, dazzlingly white in the afternoon sunshine.

"What is that large building on the left?" asked the young Roman.

"That building was erected by the emperor Antoninus Pius to care for women in childbirth, and for those who are mortally ill. For six centuries, the laws of this sanctuary decreed that no births and no deaths should take place within the sacred precinct, but Romans have changed that."

Apellas shuddered at the thought that the mothers in their travail and the poor dying patients were forced to leave the Hieron and suffer their torments with only the ground as a bed and the heavens above as a roof. He felt proud that the Romans had put an end to this cruel practice.

Their guide pointed out to them, as they passed, the temple of Artemis beyond the building of Antoninus Pius. Directly in front of them stood a small temple with six Doric columns of striking symmetry, most exquisitely tinted. The acolyte fell upon one knee and raised his hands to Heaven. It was the temple of Asklepios.

From here, they were conducted to a circular building, the Tholos, where a group of patients were

lounging and occasionally drinking water from a spring that bubbled up in the center. Apellas regarded the Tholos with great interest. It had the reputation of being the most beautiful building in all Greece. Its floor was paved with white and black marble, and its Corinthian columns showed the most exquisitely sculptured caps.

The acolyte next led them to a long portico just behind the Tholos. One side was formed by a stone wall, the other side open with a row of tall columns supporting the roof.

"This," said their guide, "is the Abaton. Here the patients sleep and if they are devout and believers, the god appears to them in a dream and tells them what to do to be healed. Sometimes, however, their dreams are difficult to understand, and only the priest can interpret them. Here on the wall are tablets, left by grateful patients, which are lasting testimonials of the power of the great god Asklepios to heal all diseases. The gods in their wrath punish the wicked with disease. Asklepios alone can conquer disease."

The group of pilgrims gathered eagerly about the tablets. Apellas began reading while the others listened eagerly:

Euhippos carried the point of a spear six years in his jaw. As he slept in the Abaton the god took out the spear point and placed it in his hand. As soon as day came he walked out healed, carrying the spear point in his hand.



A man who could not move the fingers of one hand came to the god as a suppliant. As he saw the tablets in the Abaton he was skeptical of the cures and made fun of the inscriptions. As he slept he saw a face, he dreamed he played at dice, and tried in vain to throw them when the god appeared, seized him by the hand and stretched out his fingers. After he had stretched out his fingers several times the god asked him if he was still skeptical of the cures. He answered "No." The god then said "because you were skeptical so in future your name shall be Unbeliever."

Apellas paused, looked significantly at the Greek philosopher and continued reading:

Kleinatas of Thebes came with a mass of lice on his body, slept in the Abaton and saw a face. He dreamed the god stood him up, took off his clothes and brushed the lice off his body with a broom. When day had come he left the sanctuary healed.

Heraieus of Mytilene had no hair on his head but much on his chin. He was ashamed because people laughed at him and went to sleep in the Abaton. The god rubbed some salve on his head and the hair grew again.

The group laughed at this naïve story but were quite convinced of the god's power. Apellas continued reading, the interest and faith of his auditors apparently increasing as he read. There were accounts of lameness, dropsy, blindness, deafness, and ulcers cured by the god. They heard of women who had long been childless who conceived after sleeping in the Abaton. They heard of scoffers and skeptics

who left healed and believing. They heard of ungrateful rogues who tried to cheat the god but were always found out. One inscription describing such an event Apellas read twice:

N. N. of X was blind and came into the sanctuary. As he was healed by the god, he gave him thanks as was proper. He had promised, however, to dedicate a gold statue to him. Instead of this he gave a statue not made of solid gold but with a wooden center and covered with brass foil. The god now made him blind again, so he had a statue made of solid gold and dedicated it to the god. Immediately his sight was restored.

Night was now fast falling. A short distance away they could hear the chants of the priests before the temple of Asklepios. An acolyte appeared and led the pilgrims to the bath-house where each was bathed, dried carefully and then rubbed with aromatic oils. Now purified, they returned, pausing on their way before the temple of Asklepios where they offered up their prayers to the god. The servitors now came into the Abaton, lighted the lights, motioned to the pilgrims to retire to their couches and then served each with a glass of wine. A procession of priests coming from the temple filed through the Abaton, chanting as they walked. After they had passed, the temple servitors extinguished the tapers. A strange lassitude seized Apellas. Almost before the last taper had been extinguished he was sound asleep.

Presently, it seemed that he awoke. Before him in the darkness stood a figure robed in white. He started



to cry out, but the figure placed its forefinger over its lips. This warning was, however, unnecessary for try as he would, he could not utter a sound. He regarded the figure more closely; it was a man, yes, a god, it could be none other than Asklepios himself.

"Marcus Julius Apellas of Mylasa," began the god. "I appeared to you at Mylasa and commanded you to come here to be healed. You obeyed my summons, you shall not be disappointed.

"You have been afflicted with intestinal troubles and nervousness. Now listen to the god. You must not worry so much. Watch your diet; eat bread and cheese, more celery and lettuce, drink milk and honey and lemonade. Take more exercise, run every day in the stadium, take a long walk every day, go barefooted frequently, rub your body with sand and with salt and mustard. Every day take a bath, follow the bath with massage and don't forget to exercise on the see-saw. The next two days wear your cloak over your head."

"But why for the next two days," Apellas attempted to say, but the words seemed to stick in his throat. In another moment the figure had disappeared; Apellas turned on his side and slept.

The next morning Apellas was awakened by the patter of rain. He raised himself from the couch and looked around. The other pilgrims were all asleep, some reclining on couches while others lay upon the bare floor. Presently a priest in white robes came into the Abaton followed by an acolyte swinging a censer

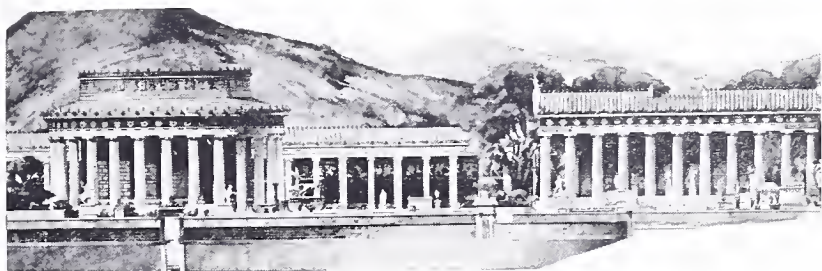
from which clouds of fragrant smoke arose. He came directly to Apellas, who raised himself still higher on his couch and opened his lips ready to tell his dream, but the priest spoke first.

“Don’t forget the advice of the god. Follow every counsel and don’t forget to wear your cloak over your head for two days.”

Apellas looked out at the rain. Now he understood why he should wear his cloak over his head. The other pilgrims awoke, one by one, and the priest went to each in turn. Apellas could not always hear the conversation, but he overheard enough to learn that some had had no dreams, that others had had dreams already known to the priest while still others told their dreams to the priest, who interpreted them and prescribed treatments.

It rained all that day as it did the next. Apellas spent most of the time in the Tholos drinking water from the sacred spring and talking with other patients. There he saw a man who was carried into the Hieron on a stretcher, paralyzed, and now he walked as well as any one. He talked to a man who had been deaf but could now hear the softest whisper, and he listened to a man who had been dumb but now talked so incessantly that Apellas almost wished he had not been healed.

The next few days were bright and clear, and Apellas followed the god’s directions scrupulously. He ran in the stadium, bathed in warm water,



*The Sacred Precinct of Epidauros*



*The Temple of Æsculapius at Epidauros*



rubbed his body with sand and salt, drank honey in his milk and sacrificed daily at the temple of Asklepios. Several afternoons he walked over to the theater where the plays of Æschylus were being performed. The sight in the magnificent theater thrilled him, fifteen thousand spectators listening intently to the magnificent old plays, in which the power and divinity of the Greek gods were portrayed. One afternoon he sat upon the highest row in the amphitheater and was amazed to find that he could hear clearly every word although the actors did not lift their voices above a conversational tone.

One day he suffered from headaches. The priest told him to rub his head with anise and oil, which he did and the headache disappeared. Another day he had a sore throat and, on the command of the priest, gargled with cold water, which healed him promptly.

Day by day he grew stronger, he became bronzed and tanned, his intestinal pains disappeared and he felt himself healed. On the fourteenth day the priest came to him and said:

“Thou art healed. Write down the history of thy illness and cure and make an offering in silver to the Hieron that thy story may be recorded in stone and that thank-offerings may be made to the god.”

With a heart full of thankfulness and gratitude, Apellas made his offering, mounted a donkey, and rode forth. A small group were leaving at the same

time, among them the Greek philosopher. He was bronzed and ruddy, his eyes bright, his cheeks glowing.

"You remained two weeks also," asked Apellas.

"Yes," responded the Greek. "I came like the man who couldn't move his fingers—without faith. Through faith I have been healed. I have no more pains in my joints and feel strong enough to walk to Epidaurus if necessary."

"What is life without faith," answered Apellas, "without faith in the gods."

Silently they rode through the gate of the Hieron and down the Sacred Way to the sea.

Centuries passed. The Roman Empire fell, the cult of Asklepios and of all the gods fell before the victorious onslaught of a new religion which came from Nazareth. The cross of Christ was raised over all Greece but finally lowered before the crescent of Islam. Epidaurus was razed, its temples torn down, the superb temple of Asklepios and the Tholos reduced to a mere mass of hewn stones which were gradually covered by the deposit of centuries and buried. Only the magnificent theater stood, resisting the ravages of weather and the vandalism of man.

The memory of Epidaurus and its glories did not, however, fade from Greek minds. After eighteen centuries Greece again became free, and one of the first undertakings of the new Greece was to uncover the glories of the Greece of antiquity. During the years



1881-1887, a Greek archæologist, Kavvadias, uncovered the ruins of the Hieron of Epidaurus, where for eight hundred years the cult of Asklepios had flourished. He uncovered the temples of Asklepios and of Artemis, the Tholos and the Abaton where he found the famous votive tablets which patients had left two thousand years before and which generations of patients had read. He also found a large tablet which began "I, M. Julius Apellas, from Idria of Mylasa, was ordered here by the god, because I was often ill and suffered from digestive disturbances." This tablet is preserved to-day in the museum near the theater.

At Epidaurus the medical treatment, like the temple and the theater, remains a tribute to the remarkable clarity of the Greek mind. They had gymnastics, baths, and massage—the physical therapy of the moderns—together with drugs and faith—which moderns often designate psychotherapy. The patient, while he took drugs and physical therapy, was never allowed to forget that disease was something that the god giveth and the god taketh away. Above all else the great healer was faith.

We shall never know whether Apellas dreamed that a god appeared to him with divine commands, or whether it was a priest, a mortal man speaking to a patient who was half conscious from a drug which had been added to his wine. To him it was a vision which filled him with faith that he would be cured. The last lines on his tablet say "With

thankful heart and now become well I took my departure." The history of healing for the next eighteen centuries is filled with similar experiences and there are as many in the twentieth century as in the second.



## *Chapter II*

### THE FAITH OF LOURDES

ON ONE side of a narrow valley in southern France rises a sharp jagged cliff. Rain and wind beating for ages against its face have hollowed in it numerous small recesses, one sufficiently large to be designated a grotto. About the middle of the past century there occurred in this grotto a series of events which attracted the attention and have provoked much controversy in the medical and theological worlds. Many of the great crusades in history, great movements in religion, and great wars of liberation have been instigated by persons of lowly origins, and the events in the grotto were of the same pattern.

The small town of Lourdes lies on the bank of the river which hurries past this cliff and differs little from most of the towns in that part of France. The inhabitants, mostly of peasant stock, were unenterprising and contented, and judged by modern standards, were ignorant and superstitious. The

countryside was filled with legends of trees that whispered, stones that bled, and of evil spirits that haunted the forests and sprang upon people unless they crossed themselves and said their prayers as they walked along the paths. In this little town of some three or four thousand, a little peasant girl was born in 1844. As soon as she was large enough, Bernadette Soubirous became a shepherdess, and learned to tend the flocks in the fields. As a child, she was very thin and nervous, and at an early age developed a severe asthma, which harassed her all her life. At the age of eleven she could neither read nor write, but finally learned the prayers of the rosary, and spent most of the day saying her prayers and counting her beads as she sat beside her sheep. For a number of years she lived at the neighboring town of Bartres with a family of that village, but when she was fourteen she returned to Lourdes. Here she lived with her parents, who were miserably poor, all—father, mother, and five children—living in a single room.

Bernadette had been in Lourdes only some two or three weeks when, one chilly February morning, her mother told her to go and gather firewood. She, a younger sister and a neighbor girl, hugging their ragged wraps about them, walked along the banks of the River Gaue, looking for driftwood. Bernadette, because of her asthma, could not keep up with the others, and lagged behind. Presently, she came to the great cliff, a half mile from the village. The

angelus rang from the little parish church. Bernadette felt a sudden commotion within her breast, followed by a terrific roaring in her ears, as though a tempest had suddenly burst upon her. She looked around in terror to see what havoc the tempest had wrought, but to her amazement not a twig on the trees moved nor was there a ripple on the surface of a near-by pool of water.

Bernadette now turned toward the rocks. Just above the grotto or cavern was a small niche in the rock from which issued a blinding light. The peasant girl, terror stricken, fell to her knees and began counting her beads. Presently, in the midst of the light, she saw a lady clothed in white with a blue sash, wearing a long veil and slippers with red roses on them. Bernadette watched the lady for a few moments enraptured, then the light faded and the lady disappeared. Bernadette ran and caught up with her companions. She asked the other two girls if they had seen anything, but both answered no. They were, however, struck by the strange look and manner of Bernadette, and questioned her closely. At first she was confused and refused to talk, but later she told the girls, under promise of secrecy, the vision she had seen.

That night at home, after family prayers, Bernadette burst into tears and sobbing, told her story to the family. Her father and mother reproved her sharply for her nonsense, and warned her not to go near the rocks again. The story of the apparition,

however, spread through the town, and the following Sunday the townspeople gathered about the girl and insisted that she go again to the grotto. This time she carried with her a bottle of holy water, to test the apparition, whether it was of God or came from the Devil.

Bernadette, accompanied by the people, went to the grotto. After waiting before it a few moments, the blinding light once more appeared and with it the lady in white. The lady in white smiled upon her, showed no fear of the holy water, and presently vanished. The townspeople who were with Bernadette saw no dazzling light, no veiled woman in white, only the little girl on her knees.

The following Tuesday Bernadette again went to the rocks, the white lady reappeared, and commanded her to come there every day at noon for fifteen days. The little shepherdess obeyed these commands faithfully.

One day the white figure said, "Tell the priests they must build a chapel here." Two days later the figure told Bernadette, "Go drink and wash at the spring." This command puzzled Bernadette, since there was no spring near. However, as she groped her way into the grotto, her hand suddenly touched the rock, and instantly cold water began to bubble forth under her hand.

On several subsequent occasions the white figure urged that a chapel be built on the spot, and promised that the people of all nations would worship

there. At one of the last appearances the figure clasped her hands, looked up to heaven and said softly, "I am the Immaculate Conception." Bernadette was now confirmed in her belief that the figure veiled in white was the Virgin Mary.

The apparitions, eighteen in all, created intense excitement, attended by mingled emotions. On one occasion Bernadette remained before the grotto in a state of ecstasy for a long time and finally had to be carried home by main force. Her mother, on hearing of this occurrence, was furious, and would have beaten the girl, had not neighbors interfered.

Many persons followed Bernadette to the grotto where she had her visions. The number increased with each visitation, and in the course of the eighteen apparitions, several thousand persons saw her on these noteworthy occasions. Not one of them saw the blinding light, beheld the shining figure, or heard the voice. To them the cliff and the grotto appeared as usual, and before it knelt the little shepherdess, her eyes raised to heaven and a look of rapture on her face. Some were convinced by "the face of the child transformed like the face of an angel, as the face of Moses shone when he talked with God" that the child had seen a vision. Others were skeptical and thought the whole affair was sheer nonsense.

At the earlier apparitions, Bernadette had a skeptical and critical audience watching her. After the miraculous appearance of the spring in the grotto, popular sympathy turned in her direction. Several

people who had been ill of various complaints drank the water and were instantly cured. The stories of these cures spread and with each telling received new embellishments. The poor and suffering peasants in the valley of the Gaue were soon convinced that the Virgin Mary had appeared to the little shepherdess and had shown her a spring of water which would cure all their ills. After the later apparitions, these people regarded Bernadette not as an ignorant child but as a little saint, and crowds clustered about her trying to kiss the hem of her garments.

Most of the peasants of Lourdes and of the countryside now became her devoted partizans. The clergy at first held aloof while the civil authorities were definitely hostile. The magistrates thought the shepherdess was a lunatic and commissioned two doctors to examine her. Those physicians reported that she was suffering from a nervous disorder and was having hallucinations. The civil authorities ordered a barrier built about the grotto to keep the people away. The people tore it down; the authorities built it up again. The strife continued. Large crowds of the lame, the halt, and the blind assembled before the barrier and demanded admission. Finally, Napoleon III, then Emperor of the French, ordered that the barrier be removed and that all who wished should be allowed free access to the grotto. The people had won!

Toward the end of that year, the Bishop of Tarbes appointed a commission to investigate the matter.



The commission examined Bernadette as well as several thousand people who had seen her at the grotto. After four years of painstaking investigation, the bishop published the results, and gave his verdict: The whole affair was absolutely authentic; it was to be believed by the faithful, Bernadette had really seen, not once, but eighteen times, the Virgin Mary at the grotto. This decision of the bishop was confirmed by Pope Leo XIII who authorized a special office and a mass in commemoration of the Virgin's appearance to the little shepherd girl.

Leo's successor, Pius X, extended the observance of this feast to the entire church and directed that it be celebrated on February eleventh, the day of the first appearance of the Virgin in the grotto. This was the end of the controversy so far as the church was concerned.

Why should the Virgin have chosen to reveal herself to a poor, unlettered, superstitious peasant girl? Possibly because, as one writer put it, "Out of the mouths of babes God at times ordains strength, and to the simple-minded He reveals what is hidden from the wise and learned. Certainly the Founder of Christianity did not choose His apostles from among the wise and learned."

It would be pleasant to record that Bernadette herself, after drinking of the waters from the miraculous spring, was restored to health and lived to an advanced age, receiving the daily homage of those who, like herself, had been cured by the miraculous water.

Unfortunately poor Bernadette who found a cure for others could not find one for herself.

Soon after the apparitions, she went to live at the convent in Lourdes where she made her first communion and with great difficulty learned to read and write. Her asthma grew steadily worse, so she was taken up into the mountains for some baths, but these failed to relieve her. At the age of twenty-one she was transferred to another convent, that of St. Gildard in Nevers. Here her health steadily declined, her nervousness and asthma grew worse and she spent her days in a wheel-chair, weak and emaciated, counting her beads. On Easter Monday, 1879, she was seized with attacks of shivering and saw the Devil prowling about, jeering, and scowling at her. In great fright, she screamed and yelled to him to leave her. Soon after, death brought relief to her sufferings, physical, and mental. She passed away at the early age of thirty-five, twenty years after she had seen the Virgin in the grotto. Forty-four years after her death she was canonized as Saint Bernadette of Lourdes.

Numerous attempts have been made by skeptical persons to deny the reality of the visions of St. Bernadette. These attempts began with the first apparition and have continued down to the present day. St. Bernadette suffered from continued bad health, and was ignorant, nervous, and grossly superstitious. At fourteen she believed a certain tower was haunted by a demon and would never pass it after sundown.



While she saw the great light in the grotto and the Virgin appear above it, thousands of persons who were present on the spot saw no light and no lady in white wearing a blue sash. They saw nothing but the rocks which looked as they always did. Every physician to-day, who treats nervous and mental disorders, is familiar with patients who see strange people and hear voices which are not apparent to the doctors and nurses. Indeed, in the presence of such phenomena, the nurse usually records on the patient's chart the word "hallucinations." The later story of St. Bernadette's life suggests that she was a victim of what medical science calls a neuropathy, or nervous disease. Indeed, two physicians who examined her said she was suffering from a nervous disorder and had hallucinations. She swooned at times, had what are commonly called trances, and before her death as we have said saw the Devil himself jeering at her.

On the other hand, some unbelievers became her champions. Monsieur Estrade, an educated, intelligent official of the French Government, came to scoff. He accompanied her to the rock and, while no unlettered, superstitious peasant, at the sight of the girl's face, he fell on his knees and doffed his hat. Later he wrote, "We heard nothing; but what we could and did see and understand, was that a conversation was going on between the mysterious Lady and the child upon whom our gaze was fixed." The Bishop of Montpellier, a cultured, learned

prince of the Church, doubted the whole affair, and came to talk with Bernadette. After questioning the shepherdess and listening to her story, he said, "It is all true. A simple uncultured peasant girl such as this, could not possibly have imagined it all, for it would do credit to the most richly gifted imagination." The Bishop of Tarbes was also convinced after long inquiry, and Pope Leo XIII, acknowledged by all not only as the greatest pope in a century but also one of the most cultured and learned scholars of his time, believed that the little peasant girl had really seen the Virgin.

The critic may object that the bishops were too credulous and wished to use the event for the glory or even aggrandizement of the Church. The believer retorts that the skeptic has no faith and without faith, there can be no belief. Pontius Pilate in a moment of despair and hesitation wondered what was the truth. Many earnest people, learned and ignorant, devout and skeptical, have sympathized with Pilate as they have considered the problem of Bernadette Soubirous.

The miracles wrought at Lourdes have excited more interest, more wonder and more skepticism than the appearance of the Virgin to the peasant girl. Bernadette lived to see great throngs of pilgrims come to Lourdes to be healed in its magical waters, but she had left Lourdes before the magnificent basilica was built above the grotto, as the Virgin had commanded.

Lourdes is visited yearly by an increasing concourse of people. Georges Bertrin estimates that one million visit the shrine each year. Oxenham gives approximately the same figures—about 40,000 each week—and states that on one occasion 120,000 people assembled before the Basilica. Johnson estimates that between 200,000 and 500,000 pilgrims visit Lourdes each year. All kinds of pilgrims wander into the little town, priests, nuns, and faithful laymen who make a pilgrimage to the holy spot, as they do to Jerusalem, sick and crippled persons who come to be healed, skeptics who go to see and criticize, travelers who are impelled only by curiosity. All nations of the world are represented.

The point of chief interest and devotion in Lourdes is the grotto and the niche above it, where the Virgin appeared to Bernadette. The niche is now occupied by a statue of the Virgin dressed just as Bernadette described her in a white dress with a blue sash and slippers with red roses. Below the niche is a pulpit in which stands a priest reciting the rosary. In front of the grotto the sick gather on crutches, stretchers, and in wheel-chairs awaiting their turns to be carried to the miraculous waters.

A high iron fence with an open door in each side stands in front of the grotto. Within, there is a small altar, a few chairs and a miniature organ. This small chapel is lighted by a veritable forest of burning candles and its walls are covered with rosaries, tokens of gratitude, and with crutches and various surgical

appliances which healed patients have thrown away. The miraculous spring is no longer visible, since the water from it is now piped outside to the bath-houses that line the foot of the cliff. The baths, or piscinas, are small chambers in which there are stone troughs about the size of a bath-tub, filled with water from the spring. Here patients are stripped by the attendants, laid on webbed stretchers and lowered into the water.

Above the grotto are the three churches, superimposed, first the Church of the Rosary, above it, the Crypt cut out of the solid rock of the cliff; and above the Crypt, on top of the cliff, the magnificent Basilica. In each church numerous masses are said daily and there is a continuous stream of people ascending and descending the cliff. Religious processions are of almost daily occurrence, starting from the village and moving toward the Basilica. Sometimes there are as many as 60,000 in the procession, singing, chanting, praying, as they move along with banners and crucifixes. Toward the end of the procession comes a large group of priests walking under a baldachin, or canopy, in their center a priest carrying the sacred Host in a brilliant, golden, sun-rayed receptacle. At about the same time that the leaders of the procession have reached the Basilica above, the priests in white and gold robes carrying the baldachin, have reached the large square near the grotto. Here the sick and lame and infirm have gathered. The arch-priest, who carries the Host, elevates it, as the aco-

lytes swing their smoking censers and the priests chant. The crowds fall to their knees and cross themselves devoutly. The arch-priest carries the Host slowly through the crowd halting at each stretcher and blessing the sick and unfortunate.

The ceremony of blessing the sick completed, the Host is now carried to the portico of the Church of the Rosary where it is elevated in the sight of the crown and the Benediction pronounced. The sick now disperse in various directions, some to their lodgings, others to the bath-houses—some to be healed, some to continue suffering.

At night the churches are frequently illuminated and there are candle-light processions of priests and pilgrims to the grotto and to the churches above, chanting as they walk, "*Ave, Ave, Ave, Maria!*" On such occasions the square is crowded with sufferers watching the procession with wondering eyes, softly chanting under their breaths and whispering a prayer that they may be healed.

Many observers have pointed out the startling similarity between the ritual of Lourdes and that of Epidaurus. The sacred spring, the procession of priests, the chants, the acolytes swinging their censers, the frequent religious ceremonies are common to both. They also have an even greater and deeper similarity—both inspired faith.

In certain scientific circles the word miracle always excites some degree of mirth. Pierre Janet, one of the greatest authorities on the mind the present

century has seen, takes exception to this skeptical attitude. He writes:

From time to time it has been the fashion to laugh at miracles and to deny that they occur. This is absurd, for we are surrounded by miracles; our existence is a perpetual miracle; every science has begun by the study of miracles. The miraculous enters into a huge category of phenomena which conflict with scientific determinism.... When such phenomena are quite indifferent to us, we call them chance happenings; when they are hurtful to us, we describe them as fate; and when these undetermined phenomena are agreeable to us, we speak of them as miracles.

The writer of these words is a profound thinker, a careful observer, a candid writer. They stamp him as the possessor of an open mind and a tolerant attitude, and an earnest seeker after the truth of certain phenomena which are still obscure to the human mind. His judgment of Lourdes can not but be of interest to us.

Epidaurus had its skeptics, some of whom were converted, as we can read in the tablets. Of those who remained impenitent there is no record. Lourdes had and still has its skeptics. Some of the skeptics have been converted by what they saw at Lourdes, others have had their skepticism confirmed and strengthened by a visit to Lourdes. Physicians seem to be especially difficult to convince of the miracles of Lourdes. Some allege that the physicians have this attitude because Lourdes is a competitor. A more



correct answer, according to some, is that every physician of experience has a few similar miracles to his own credit without any appeal to the supernatural. At times the medical profession of France has shown an organized hostility to Lourdes. A few years ago a number of prominent physicians protested against the somewhat promiscuous way in which patients suffering from a variety of diseases were dipped indiscriminately, one after the other, into the piscinas. These doctors denounced Lourdes as a menace to health and as the disseminator of disease. But their protests fell upon deaf ears.

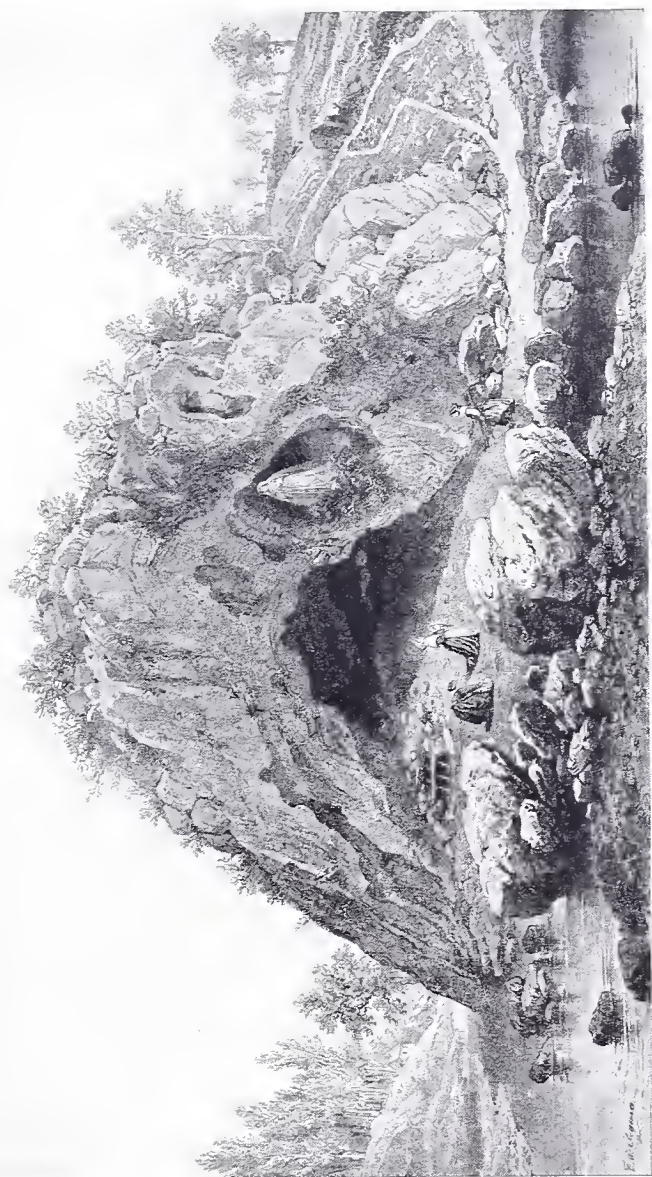
Epidaurus, as we have said, had its skeptics but also its champions. Among the latter was the illustrious Galen, physician to the Emperor Marcus Aurelius and one of the greatest physicians who ever lived. Galen, the father of experimental medicine, a man untouched by the prevalent superstitions, whose clear logical Greek mind never was hospitable to mysticism, wrote, "We have proof at the temple of Æsculapius that many serious illnesses can be cured solely by the shock administered to the mind." Similarly, Lourdes has its champions among the medical profession, and even if they lack the eminence of Galen and his remarkable lucidity of mind, yet we can not but be impressed, as Janet was, by their honesty and good faith. Prominent among these is Dr. Boissarie who was for several years Head of the Medical Authentication Bureau at Lourdes, a board

which examines the evidence and decides whether a miracle has really been performed.

Dr. Boissarie's book, *Healing at Lourdes*, contains a detailed account of many cures and answers many questions that come quite naturally to one's mind. He states that the register of the bureau contains, on an average, 150 cures a year, but adds, "We should recognize that all these statistics are mental gymnastics, without any possible application to the ground on which we stand." Dr. Boissarie is very impatient with statistics which are to most people rather tiresome reading, yet possess a certain value.

Dr. Boissarie's book describes in great detail the history of many cures wrought at Lourdes: ulcers, caries of the bone, tuberculosis of the bone, arthritis, blindness, epilepsy, otitis, pulmonary tuberculosis, and club-foot. Every physician has seen patients suffering from these diseases recover, although not so suddenly as at Lourdes. Many cases of ulcerations are described in which the bandages fell off as the patient was dipped in the piscina and on removal from the water the ulcers were completely healed. The account of a cure of a little child with club-foot attracts our attention. We read that the child was healed after three baths in the pool, took off her appliance, and walked along, maintaining her equilibrium. No mention is made of any change in the deformity. To the cure of nervous disorders Dr. Boissarie gives very little space, only nine pages in a book of 369 pages.





Giraudou

*The Vision of St. Bernadette at the Grotto of Lourdes*



Dr. Boissarie mentions a large number of physicians who come to Lourdes to scoff and remain to pray. The miracles wrought at Lourdes, he states, have brought back into the fold of the Church many lukewarm Catholics, some misguided Protestants, even many physicians who had become indifferent or skeptical. This last is in itself a notable achievement since French physicians as a group have not for years been noted for their piety. In 1804, when Pope Pius VII came to Paris to crown Napoleon emperor, a group of five medical students, among them young Laënnec—later immortal as the discoverer of auscultation—were presented to the pope. "Holy Father," said Cardinal Sala, "these are pious physicians." The pope smiled, placed his hand on the forehead of one of the young men and murmured, "*Medicus pius, res miranda*" (a pious physician, a remarkable thing).

The reports of visitors vary. Johnson describes the case of a Philadelphia boy who had never walked. One of his legs was withered and he went about in a wheel-chair. After trying a great many physicians, the boy's godmother suggested that he go to Lourdes, and agreed to pay all of the expenses of the trip. The boy's father scoffed at the idea, but finally yielded to the boy's pleading, for the boy had become very eager to make the trip and felt sure that Lourdes would cure him. On being dipped into the piscina, he did not immediately recover, but with continued immersions gradually grew better, and

was soon able to walk. The withered leg never became as large as the other but was quite serviceable. Johnson did not seem convinced, and remarks that "the boy was himself so eager to try the cure. He believed, and he made an effort to use his limbs such as he had never made before."

Harry J. Greenwall, who visited Lourdes in 1937, writes rather impatiently of the place and its cures. To quote a paragraph from his *Face of France*:

Is religion exploited in Lourdes?

Obviously it is. It is a non-regulated traffic in souls. We stand behind the line of crippled pilgrims and watch a grim sight. A deformed and idiot boy child is held aloft in his father's arms. The mother is there, too. Both the parents' eyes are running tears. The child has the semi-grin of an imbecile. Can a man who professes religion professionally, so little understand the Almighty as to believe that this little idiot boy can be switched to normal? \*

Some cases of miraculous cures which later proved to be frauds have been given wide publicity. One of the best known of these was the case of the notorious Pierre Delannoy. Pierre was an orderly in one of the large Paris hospitals during the years 1877 to 1881. Becoming tired of the drudgery and long hours, he decided that the lot of patient was far easier than that of orderly. So he decided to become a patient instead and pretended to have locomotor ataxia. He had seen many of these patients, had

\*Published by Funk & Wagnalls Company, and quoted by permission.

observed them attentively, knew their symptoms, studied their gait and was able to feign the disease so well that he lived for six years in various hospitals, completely deceiving the doctors. This was easier to do formerly than it would be now in the days of more refined diagnosis; but even now, a clever charlatan might succeed, for all cases of locomotor ataxia do not run true to form. One day, however, a doctor suggested some drastic methods of treatment, and Pierre decided it was time to move.

He next appeared in Lourdes, walking on crutches and seemingly a hopeless cripple. He was immersed in the piscina and after being taken out, stood on his feet, threw away his crutches and walked forth briskly, to the amazement of the crowd. He was then taken to various places by the clergy and exhibited as an example of the miraculous powers of the Lourdes water. Later, he was placed in charge of a home for invalids; but finding the work not to his taste, he disappeared suddenly, taking the funds of the institution with him. He next appeared in Paris feigning insanity and was admitted to the Hospital of St. Anne. He was diagnosed by the physicians as suffering from an incurable form of insanity and regarded as a hopeless lunatic, until he decamped one night with some twelve hundred francs (pre-war value). At last, he was arrested, and although stoutly asserting his innocence, was sentenced to four years at hard labor.

Such deceptions caused the authorities at Lourdes

to redouble their efforts to prevent similar occurrences. No patient is accepted without a properly attested medical history and no cure is registered until it has been observed subsequently for twelve months and a later medical examination made.

In 1892, the novelist, Emile Zola, spent two weeks at Lourdes, observing the events there and gathering material for a book, which appeared two years later. Zola, although a skeptic, wrote:

I will admit that I came across some instances of real cures. Many cases of nervous disorders have undoubtedly been cured, and there have also been other cures which may perhaps be attributed to errors of diagnosis on the part of doctors who attended the patients so cured. . . . Remember that most of the sick persons who go to Lourdes come from the country, and that the country doctors are not usually men of either great skill or great experience. But all doctors mistake symptoms. Put three doctors together to discuss a case, and in nine cases out of ten they will disagree in their diagnosis. . . . The Lourdes miracles can neither be proved nor denied. A person comes and is cured. He has but to get three doctors together to examine the case. They will disagree as to what was the disease from which the patient suffered.\*

Georges Bertrin states that during the first fifty years after the appearance of the spring four thousand cures were wrought. He denies that the cures are the result of any natural effect of the waters since chemical analyses have shown them to contain no

\* *Lourdes* (1897).



medicinal substances. He is equally emphatic that suggestion plays a rôle. "They can only be," writes this distinguished professor of literature at the Catholic Institute of Paris, "from the intervention of God. There exists no natural cause capable of producing the cures witnessed at Lourdes, which dispense an unbiased mind from tracing them back to the particular agency of God." Bertrin is impatient with the suggestion that most of the patients cured suffer from nervous disorders.

Janet, however, studied 110 cures that took place in one year at Lourdes. Of these 110 cases 92 were cures of neuropathic or nervous disorders. He adds, "Nothing is more difficult than to cure a confirmed neuropath, and Lourdes would deserve all its reputation and more, if it were preëminent for the cure of neuropaths alone." All physicians, regardless of their religious beliefs, will accept this statement.

Many neurologists, however, do not agree with Janet. Petersen, after observing Lourdes and its cures, believes that through religious ecstasy, the body in such organic diseases as tuberculosis, is strengthened in its fight against disease, so that almost instantaneous recovery may occur. Erwin Liek, the well-known German physician, wrote not long ago: "There is no disturbance in the living body, no disease, whether we call it functional or organic, which is not more or less susceptible to psychic influence."

A detached impartial judge, if there be such, who

is neither a Christian nor an anti-Christian, would perhaps agree with Zola that scientifically the miracles at Lourdes could neither be proved nor denied. To believe them, as all the books written by their partizans abundantly prove, one must have faith—a faith which has shown itself down through the centuries and in many lands.



### Chapter III

#### THE DANCE OF ST. VITUS

**B**ETWEEN two mountain ranges in the heart of the Vosges, lies a fertile plain which permits an easy access from Lorraine to Alsace and which for centuries played an important rôle in history. The strategic importance of this area was recognized by the ancient Romans soon after their conquest of Gaul. Here they built two important military outposts, one at Divodurum, now called Metz, the other at Argentoratum, the modern Strasbourg. On the military road connecting these two outposts, a small village presently appeared, to which the Romans gave the name of *Tres Tabernæ*—the three inns.

In the fourth century the Romans with their Gallic allies were defeated by a wave of Germanic invaders, the Alamanni, who swarmed over this plain and took possession. The Roman emperor, Julian, better known as Julian the Apostate, hurried with a powerful army into Alsace, and drove the Teutonic hordes back across the Rhine. For fifty years *Tres Tabernæ*

and the surrounding country enjoyed peace and tranquillity, but in 406 A.D. the Alamanni in overwhelming numbers again invaded the country. This time the Romans were defeated, overwhelmed, and forced to retreat, leaving all Alsace to the Germanic invaders. Thus, early in its history, Tres Tabernæ had changed masters several times. As the Romans disappeared, Tres Tabernæ changed its name, for the French it became Saverne and for the Germans Zabern. To-day it preserves both names: "Saverne" in the official French guide-books and "Zabern" in the patois of the natives.

The inhabitants call the Saverne of to-day the pearl of the Vosges, and it is indeed a charming Alsatian town. Although its own name seems French enough, the names of near-by villages—Stambach, Gottenhausen, Otterwillers, Schweinheim, and Kreutzwald, lead one to think he must have strayed across the frontier into the Reich. When, however, he hears the people speak he knows that he is not in Germany and doubts whether he is in France, for these people speak an Alamannic dialect, the language of their Teutonic ancestors. These Alamanni also pushed down into Switzerland, where many people speak the same dialect.

Saverne is a favorite excursion point, particularly for those who enjoy tramping. As we walk southwest from Saverne along the canal, we see a gentle valley, le Ramsthal, leading off to the right and inviting us to follow it up through the hills. Soon we turn

off to the left and begin to climb the wooded slopes. The scene is lovely, though not grand or awe-inspiring. At our feet lie patches of forest and carefully tended fields, beyond which along the horizon we see the misty outlines of the mountains. Presently we emerge upon a lush green meadow lying upon a plateau, the sides of which are formed by huge crags jutting up from the hillside. These stones are not of granite, but of limestone, and time and weather have left their traces upon them, for numerous small caves and grottoes have been formed in their walls. In the largest of these grottoes there is a small chapel dedicated to St. Vitus and to this chapel, the devout and the possessed once repaired by the thousands. Few even among the learned, know who St. Vitus was or why he was sainted, but few are so ignorant as not to have heard of his dance.

This dance is called by historians the dancing mania, and its history for several centuries is closely interwoven with religious history. According to the earlier historians, this strange apparition began in Kolbig, a little town in the province of Anhalt in northern Germany, not far from Magdeburg. On Christmas Eve, in the year 1027, a group of peasants, eighteen in number, disturbed divine services by dancing and brawling in the churchyard of the convent church of Kolbig. The priest of the church, Rupprecht, in righteous indignation, inflicted a curse upon them—that they should scream and dance, without ceasing, for a whole year. If the

ancient chroniclers are to be trusted, the curse was completely fulfilled, and the unfortunate peasants continued to scream and dance until they sank knee deep into the earth. Four of them died, and the others continued throughout their lives to suffer from violent trembling of their limbs.

The news of this terrible occurrence spread far and wide, exciting apprehension and terror. The name of the priest who inflicted the terrible curse, became well known throughout the land, and was mentioned by the superstitious peasants only under their breaths and followed by the sign of the cross to save them from a like fate. His name is still preserved in German legend as the Knecht Rupprecht, who follows the *Weihnachtsmann* before Christmas, and who does not carry presents, but a bundle of switches, with which he punishes the naughty children.

A survey of the ancient records shows that events similar to those at Kolbig, but lacking the curse of Rupprecht, took place with increasing frequency during the following years. The events of the year 1324 contributed greatly to its spread. In that year, Pope John XXII excommunicated the German emperor, Ludwig IV, and declared all of his territories under a ban. Churches were closed, mass was forbidden, and the dying received no absolution nor blessing. This papal ban struck terror to the hearts of people, and helped prepare a fertile soil for the further spread of the curious malady.

In the year 1374, large crowds of men and women, obsessed by a strange mania, appeared on the streets and in the churches of Aix-la-Chapelle. They formed circles, hand in hand, and danced around in wild delirium for hours and hours, quite oblivious to the jeers and taunts of bystanders. Many onlookers, after jeering, were also seized with the strange delirium, joined hands with the dancers and outdid them in screaming and jumping. Finally, one by one, the dancers fell to the ground from sheer exhaustion, but continued to groan and to roll about. They related later that while they were dancing they neither saw nor heard anything that was going on around them but were filled with heavenly visions. Some said they were about to be immersed in a stream of blood and leaped high to escape it; others danced for sheer joy as they looked upwards and saw the heavens open and the Virgin Mary with the Christ child enthroned above.

The date of this outbreak in Aix-la-Chapelle is not without significance. The Black Death, that dreaded scourge of the Middle Ages, had died down only some twenty-odd years before. The terror that it had evoked, the harrowing scenes that were enacted, and the crimes that were committed while it raged, were still fresh in the minds of the older people. Great disasters had recently happened. The Rhine had overflowed its banks, causing the walls of Cologne to fall down, and had flooded many villages with great destruction of life and property.

Western and southern Germany were in a state of chaos. There were incessant feuds and battles between the nobles; burnings, looting, and pillage were daily occurrences. There was no security for either life or property. Crowds of beggars and thieves swarmed over the countryside, begging, pilfering, and at times forming bands for more ambitious and audacious forays. These disasters furthered the spread of this curious mental plague.

It is also noteworthy that this outbreak in Aix-la-Chapelle occurred shortly after St. John's day. From the earliest times the Germans had celebrated St. John's day with riotous dances and weird ceremonies inherited from their pagan ancestors. The people built huge bonfires around which for hours they leaped and danced in wild abandon until they fell from sheer exhaustion. St. Boniface, the apostle of Germany who evangelized the country, had forbidden the pagan ceremonies of the Nodfyr, a similar heathen celebration. The Germans obeyed the saint but transferred the ceremonies to St. John's day when they were celebrated with all the ancient pagan riotousness, but under Christian auspices. So it seems not only plausible, but quite likely that the wild revels of St. John's day in Aix-la-Chapelle gave rise to this outbreak of the dancing mania.

From Aix-la-Chapelle the malady spread to Liège, where the dancers appeared with garlands in their hair and cloths about their waists. As soon as the people had ceased dancing, their abdomens became



distended with gas and very painful. The cloths were employed as bandages and when tightly drawn about the abdomen, relieved the distension.

At first the people had watched these strange dancers with curiosity mingled with amusement, but as their numbers multiplied, curiosity gave way to fear. The dancers took possession of the religious houses, swarmed into the churches and through the streets, increasing the fear and horror of the populace. They were greatly irritated by the sight of anything red, and also abhorred pointed shoes which had recently come into fashion. So great was the fear of these strange people that the inhabitants of Liège carefully kept red objects out of sight, and the city fathers passed a regulation that all shoes must have square toes.

The dancers not only menaced the safety of the other citizens, but on several occasions, assembling in large numbers, howled at the priests, cursed them, and swore to destroy them. This filled the clergy with uneasiness and with a firm determination to stamp out this new heresy. They were convinced that these dancers were the victims of demoniacal possession, and commenced at once to exorcise the demons. In a few months all of the wild dancers were healed, for exorcism was a powerful remedy in the fourteenth century, and it must have been applied with an astonishing industry, when we remember that thousands were cured.

The plague reappeared elsewhere. It visited

Utrecht, Cologne, and Metz. An eyewitness in Metz counted eleven hundred dancers upon the market place. Metz, a prosperous and important city, found its life completely upset. Plowmen left their plows, mechanics threw down their tools, housewives left their homes, servants quitted their masters, children left their parents, to join in the riotous dancing. To aggravate the situation, hordes of vagabonds, beggars and thieves, seeing in the visitation a chance for gain, joined the dancers and took part in their revels. They consumed their food, stole their clothing and often ravished the women—all these things quite unnoticed by the dancers in their delirium. The dancers wandered from place to place, spreading the infection just as the plague patients had done a generation before.

In the year 1518, eight days before the feast of St. Mary Magdalene, a woman in Strasbourg was seized with the dancing mania. The chief magistrate of the city ordered her taken to the chapel of St. Vitus at Saverne. She was conducted thither, the priest said a mass, she was led to the altar, and returned cured. All of which leads to the question of why she was taken to the chapel of St. Vitus, and just who St. Vitus was.

St. Vitus was born at Mazara in Sicily, the son of Hylas, a Roman nobleman. Vitus was converted to Christianity and, directed by an angel, went to Rome where he suffered martyrdom under Diocletian. Somewhat obscure, as one of the innu-



merable martyrs who perished under Diocletian, he became prominent, as it were, when his relics were transferred in 836 to the Abbey of Corvei in Saxony. Many miracles were performed at his new sepulcher, which extended his fame throughout the land and greatly strengthened the faith of Rome among the Germans. Chapels in honor of St. Vitus were established far and wide during the succeeding centuries. The veneration for St. Vitus was so great in the fourteenth century that Charles IV, King of Bohemia, proclaimed him the patron saint of Bohemia, and when he built the cathedral at Prague, "a nominal body of the holy martyr was, for this purpose, brought from Parma." (Hecker.)

In the grotto near Saverne during the fourteenth century, horrified passers-by found the body of a beautiful young man who had been killed. He was buried within the grotto and soon afterwards numerous miracles of healing were performed at his tomb. These miracles came to the notice of the church which ordered that a chapel be consecrated there in honor of St. Vitus, whose cult was exceedingly popular at that time.

St. Vitus, at first, seemed to possess the power through his relics, of healing various diseases, but as the legend grew, he became especially effective in cases of demoniacal possession. According to some authorities, supplications to him in the cases of dancing mania had an interesting origin.

The ancient Wends worshiped a god called

Svantevit whose feast they celebrated by riotous dancing. These pagan rites they brought with them to Germany, and the Germans soon worshiped Svantevit along with the gods of Nordic origin. Many old pagan myths persisted, and the Germans, although converted to Christianity, easily confused Svantevit with Sankt Vit or St. Vitus. Thus, they believed these attacks of maniacal dancing were caused by St. Vitus, and he alone could cure them.

It is difficult to determine, of course, whether this is the actual origin of the belief. Professor Hecker, the learned student of epidemics in the Middle Ages, says that the priesthood in the fifteenth century invented the legend that

St. Vitus had, just before he bent his neck to the sword, prayed to God that he might protect from the Dancing Mania, all those who should solemnize the day of his commemoration, and fast upon its eve, and that there-upon a voice from heaven was heard, saying, "Vitus, thy prayer is accepted." Thus St. Vitus became the patron saint of those afflicted with the dancing plague, as St. Martin of Tours was at one time the succourer of persons with small pox, and St. Anthony of those suffering from the "hellish fire" or erysipelas.\*

The worthy magistrate of Strasbourg was obviously familiar with the powers of St. Vitus to heal the dancing mania when he sent the woman to Saverne. Her complete recovery proved that his faith was not misplaced.

\* *Medical Epidemics of the Middle Ages* (1846).

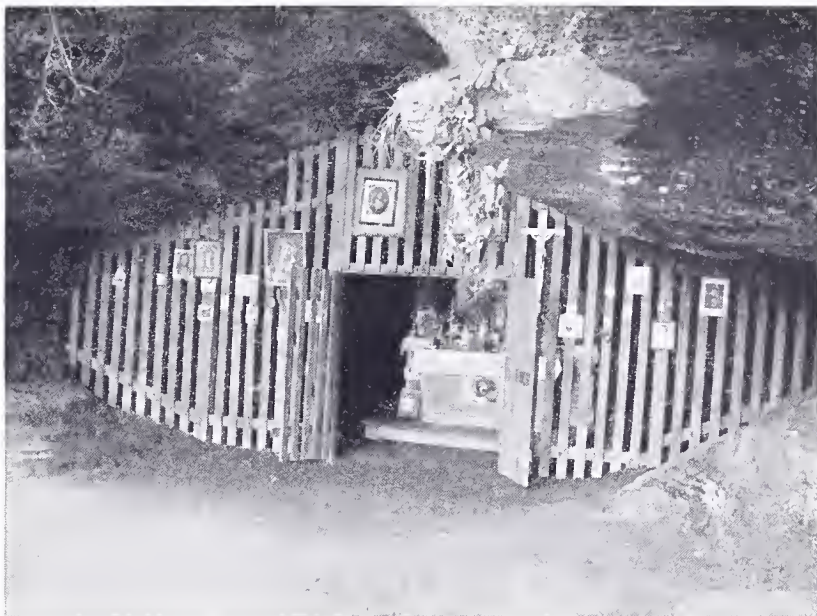
Four days later, thirty-four persons were seized with the dancing mania. These were also dispatched to the Chapel near Saverne and healed. A few days later some two hundred were dancing madly about the streets of Strasbourg. They danced day and night accompanied by musicians playing on bag-pipes and watched by large crowds of people, among whom were many anxious parents who feared that their own children might be among the victims of the strange malady. The cool head of the magistrate did not fail him in this crisis. He did not attempt to punish the misguided dancers but took a benevolent interest in their welfare. They were divided into small groups under the command of a superintendent who conducted them on foot and in carriages to the chapel of St. Vitus where priests were waiting to cure them of their peculiar obsession. As soon as the mass was finished, they were led in procession to the altar where they made a small offering, were blessed by the priest and then were dismissed, cured.

The testimony of contemporary observers states that practically all sufferers from the dancing mania who made a pilgrimage to the chapel of St. Vitus at Saverne were cured of their ailment. Thanks to its efficacy, Strasbourg in a few months was entirely rid of these strange dancers.

It is noteworthy that the physicians made no attempt, as a rule, to treat this malady, but turned its victims over to the priests. The great majority of doctors evidently thought these people were filled

with devils and that the work of casting out the devils belonged properly to the priests. A notable exception was Paracelsus, the great physician and innovator of the sixteenth century. Paracelsus, pictured by the poet Browning as a sensitive, over-refined, mystical soul, and by his enemies as a lying, cheating, bragging, hard-drinking bully, remains one of the most enigmatic figures in the history of medicine. An original, discerning thinker and observer, he clothed his thoughts in such bizarre and obscure language that one of his disciples compiled a Paracelsan dictionary to aid readers in understanding his works. His writings on the dancing mania, however, require no dictionary for a proper understanding. Paracelsus calls the disease "chorea," which, indeed, is the modern term and is simply the Greek word for a dance. Then, as now, Greek words seemed particularly appropriate for describing disease. It is interesting to note that Paracelsus employed the Greek term although he outraged his contemporaries by lecturing and writing in German instead of in Latin.

Paracelsus rejected in toto the idea that saints have the power to inflict diseases or to cure them. He states boldly that to ascribe disease "to God rather than to nature is but idle talk." He makes no mention of St. Vitus, and does not recommend prayers to him or to any other saint. He directs that patients be placed in solitary confinement until their misery brings them to their senses and, when they become



*The Chapel of St. Vitus at Saverne*



*The Dancing Mania*

[By Breughel the Elder, 1525-1569]





excited, that they be immersed in cold water. We have no record of his cures and no contemporary accounts of how effective his plan of treatment was, but we may be sure, no such crowds of patients ever swarmed to his house as made their way to the chapel at Saverne.

Epidemics are no respecters of national frontiers, and the dancing mania had become a true epidemic. From Germany, Belgium and France, the mania spread to Italy and again, like a true epidemic, it showed certain variations as it passed into a strange land. In Italy it became known as *tarantism*.

In that part of Italy commonly known as the heel of the boot, lies the province of Apulia, the chief city of which is Taranto. Near this place for centuries, a large spider has flourished which was called after the city, tarantula. This spider, well known now throughout the world, is a very ferocious-looking insect, which inspires as much fear in Texas as in Italy, although naturalists try to reassure us with the statement that the bite of the tarantula is no more poisonous than that of any other spider.

According to medieval writers the tarantulas became very numerous in Apulia during the fifteenth century and bit many persons. People who had been bitten by the spider became melancholy and curiously distracted, and seemed to lose possession of their normal senses. Many of them lost their sight, became hard of hearing, were unable to speak, and lay upon the ground or upon their beds for days,

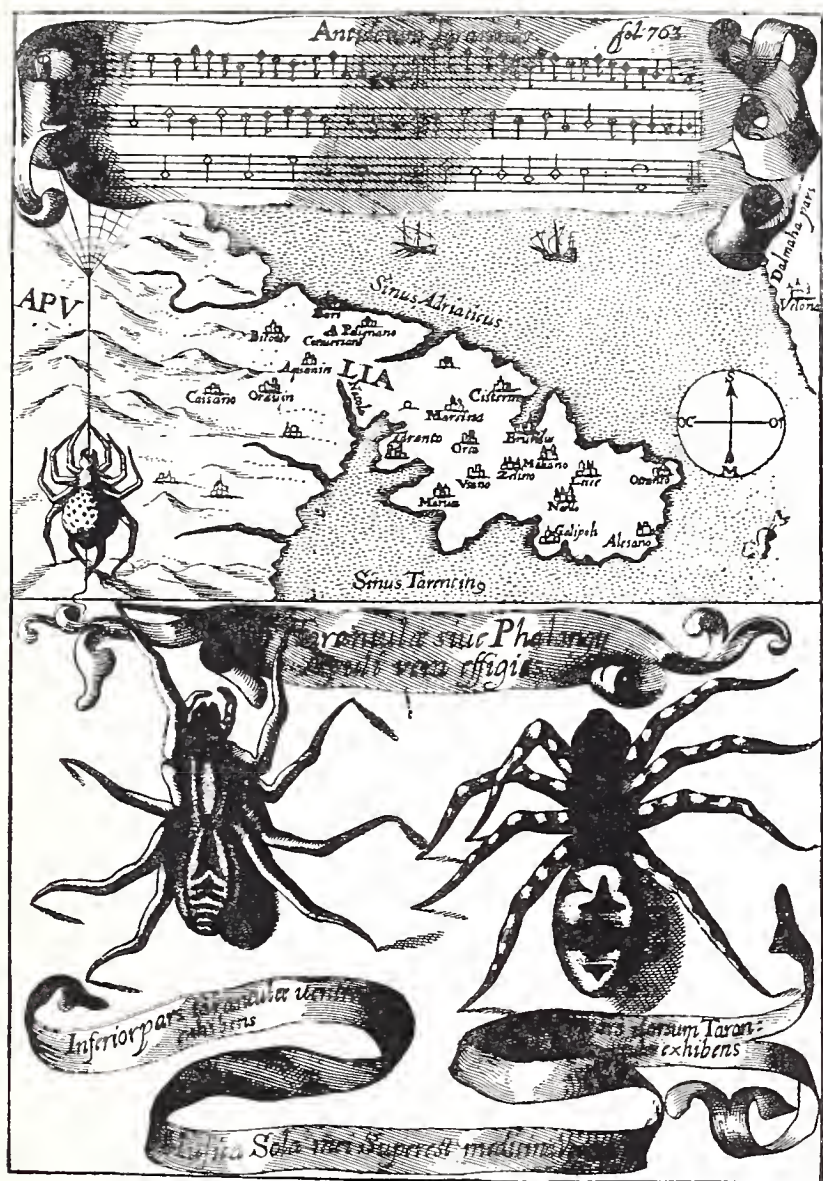
scarcely moving or uttering a sound. When, however, they heard the sound of a flute or of a guitar, a startling thing happened—they leaped to their feet and began to dance with wild abandon. As long as the music continued, the patient danced.

It was soon found that certain music was particularly effective, and for these patients a kind of dance music was composed—the tarantella, which is played to this day in southern Italy. The music was mostly in the Turkish style, “lively and abrupt,” as one author describes it. The number of the tarantella increased; and the learned father Athanasius Kircher, who was interested in everything, collected some seven or eight of them, which he illustrates on a musical scale in his treatise on magnetism.

This peculiar affection soon spread from Apulia to more distant parts of Italy. Bands of musicians wandered all over Italy curing the patients of their melancholy with music: “Cities and villages alike resounded throughout the summer season with the notes of fifes, clarinets, and Turkish drums; patients were seen everywhere who looked to dancing as their only remedy.”

The number of the afflicted was far greater than it was possible to ascribe to the bite of the tarantula. Some contemporary authorities assert that the vast majority had not been bitten at all, but only imagined they had been, while others accepted the common belief that these people had actually been bitten. They also record that those who had been





### The Music of the Tarantella

[From Athanasius Kircher, *Magnetica sive de arte magnetica*, 1643]



bitten or fancied they had, put in their appearance annually as soon as the merry notes of the tarantella sounded. Thus, the dance became a regular festival which was awaited each year with keen anticipation by the populace. Presumably, the ladies predominated at these festivals, since it soon came to be known as the *Carnevaletto delle Donne*—the little carnival of the ladies. The learned Bishop of Foligno, attempting to combat the spread of the malady and disapproving of the festival, allowed himself to be bitten by a tarantula. His experiment, however, proved a fiasco, for the good man soon afterwards became afflicted himself with the malady and obtained relief only after dancing the tarantella.

The effect of these dances upon the poor sufferers from tarantism, as the affection was called, was truly marvelous. The celebrated Matthioli has described his observations at Alessandria. The patients were lying on their couches, weak, depressed, hopeless, and waiting for death to deliver them. The remedies of the local physicians had proved futile. As soon as the musicians began to play the tarantella, they leaped to their feet as if inspired, and danced for hours without showing the slightest fatigue. Finally they broke out in a profuse perspiration after which they were cured, sometimes permanently, at other times for a year or longer.

Like a true epidemic, the dancing mania, after having spent its force in one country, spread to another, for as it spread in Italy, it seemed to be dying

down in Germany. But Italy was not the only country to which it spread: similar epidemics occurred in Scotland, in the Shetland Islands, and even in far-away America. In 1774, an epidemic occurred in Unst, the most northerly of the Shetlands, which was described by the local clergyman as "a most shocking distemper." According to the minister, it affected almost entirely the women, who were seized with an uncontrollable desire to dance and scream. He writes:

On a sacramental occasion, fifty or sixty are sometimes carried out of the church, and laid in the churchyard, where they struggle and roar with all their strength.

He speaks also of a cure

effected by a very singular remedy. . . . The cure is attributed to a rough fellow of a Kirk officer, who tossed a woman in that state, with whom he had been frequently troubled, into a ditch of water. She was never known to have the disease afterwards and others dreaded the same treatment.

In 1803, an epidemic similar to those occurring in the Middle Ages appeared in Maryville, Tennessee. "Religious enthusiasm, travelled like electricity, with astonishing velocity and was felt, almost instantaneously, in every part of the states of Tennessee and Kentucky." The people spent entire days and nights in their churches worshiping, their worship consisting of crying, laughing, singing, shouting, and gesticulating. The small primitive churches being too small to accommodate the crowds, the people

began roaming over the countryside, laughing, shouting, and dancing. The contagion spread, and soon scenes were enacted like those in Strasbourg, Cologne, and Liège with, however, one marked difference: they were Methodists, had long since thrown aside all belief in invocations to saints, and could not repair to the Chapel of St. Vitus and be healed.

England in the Middle Ages seems to have been spared infection by St. Vitus dance. Probably its isolation by water was responsible, for we can easily imagine that no sea captain would have quite enough courage to take on a cargo of wild dancers. Occasional sporadic cases did, however, occur and the people, especially the learned ones, knew what was happening on the continent, for even then the English were great travelers. Much was written on the subject in the years following, and among these writers was a certain Thomas Sydenham, called by his admirers, the English Hippocrates.

Dr. Sydenham wrote a famous medical treatise in which he describes St. Vitus Dance. He said it was a kind of convulsion attacking boys and girls who became very unsteady in their legs and showed constant trembling of the fingers. Other English physicians wrote on the subject and pointed out that these patients made many involuntary movements which they could not control, often dropped objects which they had picked up, and that some of them at times threw themselves about as if maniacal.

These authors were evidently describing a condi-



tion that had a certain resemblance to the dancing mania, and yet an even greater lack of resemblance. Presently people began to speak of the English St. Vitus dance and the German St. Vitus dance. Physicians improved the terminology by calling the former chorea minor, the latter chorea major. Chorea minor is to-day a well-defined infectious disease, familiar to all trained physicians and commonly leaves heart disease behind as a complication. Chorea major still occurs in small epidemics, especially in girls' schools, epidemics that are somewhat reminiscent of the dancing mania of the Middle Ages.

Dr. Leuch studied such an epidemic in a girls' school in Zurich in 1894. Each patient was carefully studied and the doctor was quite positive in his conclusions: the diagnosis was hysteria. The girls all showed a marked narrowing of the fields of vision—a characteristic hysterical finding. Many such epidemics have been studied in modern times and the diagnosis with a monotonous repetition has always been the same—hysteria.

The dancing mania of the Middle Ages was then a pandemic of hysteria and the tarantism of Apulia was not due to the tarantula. Few pilgrimages are made to-day to the Chapel of St. Vitus at Saverne, the path is poorly marked and the chapel itself shows no sign of frequent visitations. In southern Italy one still hears the merry notes of the tarantella and the people dance to its lovely tune, not to cast off a disease but from a sheer joy of living.

## *Chapter IV*

### THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELN

**I**N NORTHERN Germany, where the Hamel flows into the Weser, lies the picturesque little town of Hameln. This town is famous not for its music, its art, its textiles, or its trade, but for its legend, which has been told to countless generations of children in all lands. The number of legends or fairy-tales is legion, but among this vast number there are certain stories with a universal appeal to all children. The legend of Hameln is one of these.

The outlines of the story which appear in the story-books of all nations, are well known. The town of Hameln was once so infested with rats that there seemed to be no way of getting rid of the pests. One day a rat-catcher appeared and informed the magistrates that he could drive all the rats into the river by playing on his bagpipe. After some discussion, the magistrates agreed to pay him a groschen a head. On the appointed day, the rat-catcher began playing upon his pipes and at the sound of its notes, rats swarmed out of the houses and jumped into the

River Weser until there were no rats left in the village. When the rat-catcher appeared for his pay, the cunning magistrates recalled that they had agreed to pay for the rats by the head, and asked for the heads. The rat-catcher, tricked, left in a rage, but returned the next Sunday morning when the grown-ups were all at church. Again he played upon his bagpipes and this time the children instead of the rats rushed out of their houses and followed him down the street, out of the town, and across the country. They were never seen again.

Such is the legend of the Pied Piper of Hameln. Of course, it was all a myth, but like most myths, it has a basis in fact. The story had its origin in the Children's Crusade of the thirteenth century, one of the most interesting of those intensely interesting human phenomena which occurred during the Middle Ages.

When we hear of epidemics, we usually think of some of the great pestilences that have swept across countries or continents, such as the Black Death, yellow fever, or influenza. We forget that mental epidemics, or nervous epidemics, occur from time to time, and that their manifestations are invariably extraordinary and remarkable. One of these remarkable nervous epidemics was the Dancing Mania, another was the Children's Crusade. Both occurred more or less simultaneously; both showed similar symptoms; both had a similar background—neurotic and abnormal. The Children's Crusade, as Hecker



pointed out in his *Epidemics of the Middle Ages*, has been treated by historians solely as a religious phenomenon, while it was really largely a medical one. This is quite understandable, however, since the origin, the problems and possibly even the fate, of both religion and medicine are so closely interwoven.

We know that certain conditions, such as war, famine, droughts, or floods, prepare a fertile soil for plagues. It is equally true that similar misfortunes play a powerful rôle in the origin, spread, and continuation of psychic plagues. These disasters were present in abundance at the time the Children's Crusade appeared.

All Europe was in turmoil; lawlessness and anarchy prevailed over large areas. Life was cheap and property insecure. Famine was frequent, epidemics constantly present. Robber barons fought each other and plundered the merchants, while on the barons' estates, the serfs drudged hopelessly, looking back on a dreary past and forward to a hopeless future. Added to all this, men's minds were sorely troubled. Four crusades, at the cost of much blood and treasure, had failed to drive the infidel Turk from the Holy Land. The Savior's tomb still remained in the possession of the unbelievers.

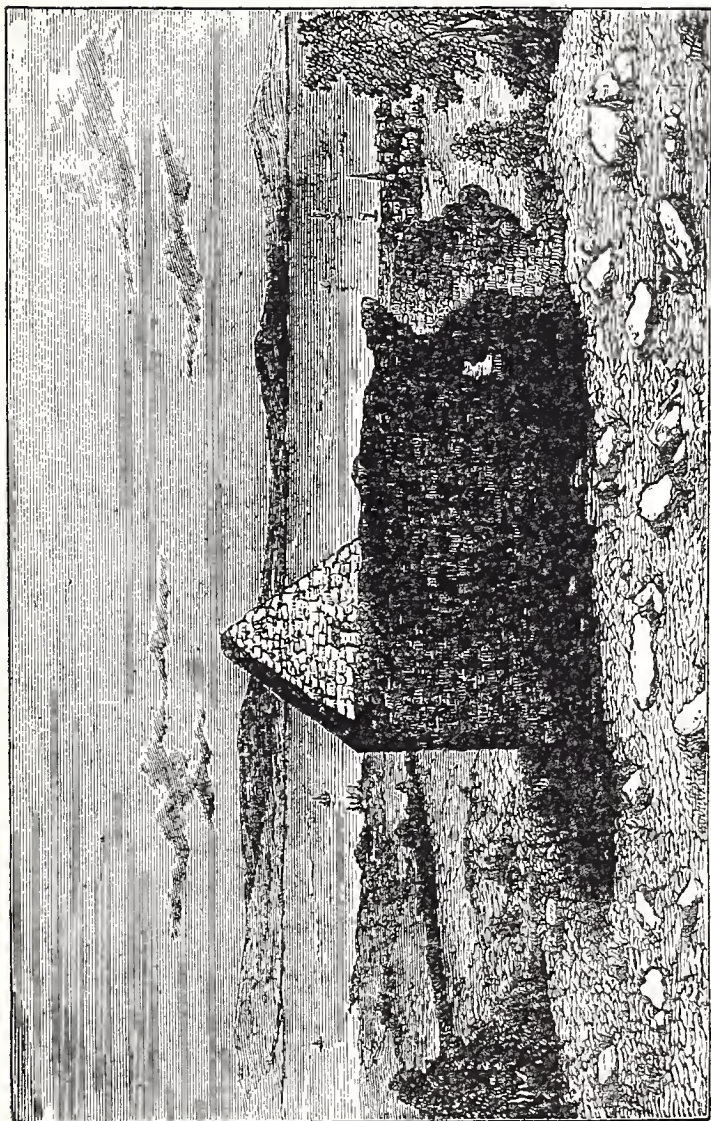
The only successful crusade had been that ordered by Innocent III against the Albigenses, an heretical sect in the south of France, who were exterminated with such thoroughness, that to-day we do not know

precisely what they taught or believed. This crusade was led by one Simon de Montfort, called "The General of the Holy Ghost," described by historians as a coarse and brutal wretch, who massacred the unfortunate Albigenses by thousands. One of these massacres was witnessed by the Pope's legate who was asked how to tell a heretic from a Catholic. The legate smiled indulgently, and replied, "Slay them all: the Lord will know his own."

Pope Innocent III, surnamed the Great, left a deep impress upon his contemporaries. Few Popes have possessed greater power, or exercised it more recklessly. Shortly after he assumed the triple tiara, he succeeded in stirring up an unusual amount of commotion in Europe, all of which worked out in his own favor. Innocent secured the victory of Frederick of Sicily over the German emperor, Otho, and annexed large portions of Otho's territory. He excommunicated King John of England, threatened England with a crusade and compelled King John to submit and to rule only as a vassal of Rome. For years the Pope ruled England through his legates.

Pope Innocent extended the territories of the Papal States, indeed, his pontificate marks the real beginning of the temporal power of the Popes. In his struggles for increased territory he had developed a new and novel technic; he decreed that his enemies were heretics and ordered a crusade against them.

The Pope, after completing to his own satisfaction his crusades in Europe, now turned his atten-



*The Church of the New Innocents*

[From George Z. Gray, *The Children's Crusade*, Houghton Mifflin, 1898]



tion to the Holy Land. He sent priests and bishops throughout Europe to stir up the people and to fan their enthusiasm to a white heat. The favorite text for these sermons, addresses, and harangues, was taken from the Master's own mouth, "I came not to send peace, but a sword." Religious processions were held throughout the land to increase the devotion and enthusiasm of the people. The Savior was pictured as a King banished from his kingdom, and appealing to his loyal subjects to restore him to his throne in Jerusalem. All those who enlisted in this noble enterprise were promised wealth and booty in this world, eternal life and happiness in the world to come. The Pope himself took an active part in this preaching campaign and always climaxed his sermons with his famous appeal, "Sword, sword, start from thy scabbard and sharpen thyself to kill."

When we read the accounts of the measures employed by the astute Innocent, we wonder how the people resisted the appeal as long as they did. Several years elapsed, however, before the Fifth Crusade got under way, and when the crusaders finally sailed for Egypt, Innocent had lain in his tomb for two years. This difficulty in kindling enthusiasm for the crusade was probably the same as that often encountered in the case of less sacred wars—there were too many alive who remembered the last crusade, too many returned crusaders who saw in the crusades, not glory, but only blood, rapine, disease, filth, and death. And again the deadly analogy holds, the



young who knew nothing of the last crusade from experience, were the only ones eager to go.

In the spring of the year 1212, Godfrey, Benedictine monk of St. Pantaleon in Cologne, noted a curious spectacle. In front of the cathedral, standing on a heap of stones, a twelve-year-old boy was haranguing a crowd. The cathedral of Cologne was not then the cathedral we know to-day, but a more modest structure in the Byzantine style. Even then, however, it contained the shrine of the Three Wise Men, where, incased in a precious golden box, lay the bones of the three wise men of the New Testament. These precious relics had been carried to Constantinople by St. Helena, mother of the Emperor Constantine, and deposited in the Church of Santa Sophia. They were later presented to the archbishop of Milan. Raynuldus, archbishop of Cologne, assisted Barbarossa in the sack of Milan and, as his part of the booty, received the sacred bones which he carried back to Cologne.

Such outstanding relics naturally attracted thousands of pilgrims to Cologne, but the monk Godfrey soon divined that the crowd in front of the cathedral was not attracted there by the relics of the Three Wise Men. Strangely enough, it was composed entirely of children who were listening attentively to the young lad who was speaking to them.

"I am Nicholas," he said, "only a poor shepherd boy. As I was tending my flocks in the fields and meditating upon the sad state of Christendom, with

the Holy Sepulcher in the hands of the infidels, I looked up in the sky and saw a blazing cross. At first, I was afraid, but then I heard a voice telling me that God had chosen me to lead a crusade to rescue the Holy Sepulcher, and that this cross was His sign that I should be successful."

The children drank in his words greedily as he told them that, at the appointed hour, an army of children would gather at Cologne, and he would lead them to the Holy Land. They would follow the Rhine, cross the Alps and march across Italy. When they arrived at the sea, it would part as it did for the Israelites of old, and they would march to the Holy Land across the dry bed—all this the voice from Heaven had promised him. He said they should go dressed as pilgrims, not as warriors, for, as he said in concluding his harangue, "We go to get the cross beyond the sea and to baptize the infidel Moslems." The children repeated these last words after him and then they sang them. Presently, the gathering dispersed and the children, as they left, again sang at the top of their voices, "We go to get the cross beyond the sea and to baptize the infidel Moslems."

The monk, Godfrey, was much perturbed by what he had seen and heard. He hastened back to his cell in the cloisters of St. Pantaleon and, taking his quill, wrote of the strange happenings. His chronicle has been preserved and remains one of the most valuable documents relating to this strange Children's Crusade.



From Cologne, the strange infection spread just as the Dancing Mania had. Crowds of children marched from town to town singing their strange hymn about rescuing the cross and baptizing the Moslem infidels. As these children entered the towns, they were met by the children of the place, who, in spite of the tears and entreaties of their parents, joined the band and marched away with them. Some firm parents refused to allow their children to leave, and locked them up in their rooms. These poor children, restrained by their parents, refused to eat, pined away and filled the air with their lamentations and entreaties. Some of them actually became maniacal. In many cases, the parents finally yielded to the entreaties of their children and, with sad hearts and eyes filled with tears, bade farewell to the youthful crusaders. Some of the well-to-do parents sent servants to look after the children, and the nobles likewise dispatched lackeys to take care of the young scions of nobility who joined the children's army. Children of all classes joined the throng, the children of the rich and of the poor, of the noble and of the peasant, all filled with common zeal to rescue the cross and baptize the infidels. It is noteworthy that unlike previous crusades, there was no lust for blood or hope of plunder; it was to be a peaceful pilgrimage to convert the infidels.

One of the bands invaded Hameln and, as elsewhere, the children marched away dancing and singing. The rat-catcher of the legend was the leader of

this band, possibly Nicholas himself, and the plaintive notes of his bagpipe, the strange hymn of the crusaders. As for the rats, possibly the strange commotion in the little town frightened these ever-present pests into leaving their numerous hiding places and caused them to jump into the river.

The description of these children, roving from place to place, singing and dancing as they went, is strangely reminiscent of the actions of their elders, the victims of St. Vitus Dance. Unfortunately, medical accounts of this crusade are lacking. We do not know whether the family doctor was called in to see the youngsters or what treatment he prescribed. But we know there were no processions to the Chapel St. Vitus, and that the only remedy seemed to be a pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

Finally the day of departure came. In June or July of the year 1212, the children assembled at Cologne, according to plan, and one morning at sunrise marched away with twelve-year-old Nicholas as their leader. Some twenty thousand children gathered in the city, each child wearing the garb of a pilgrim marked with a cross on the coat, with a wallet on his back and carrying a pilgrim's staff. There were also many standard-bearers, some carrying huge banners on which were sacred mottoes and pictures of the Savior, others carrying huge wooden crucifixes. As they marched, they sang a hymn brought by the recruits from Westphalia. The first verse ran:

*Schönster Herr Jesu,  
Herrscher aller Erden,  
Gottes und Marias Sohn;  
Dich will ich lieben,  
Dich will ich ehren,  
Du, meiner Seele Freud' und Kron!*

This hymn has been preserved through the ages and translated. It appears in the hymnal of the Episcopal Church. The English version reads:

Fairest Lord Jesus,  
Ruler of all nature,  
O Thou of God and man the Son;  
Thee will I cherish,  
Thee will I honor,  
Thou, my soul's glory, joy, and crown!

As they marched out of the city's gates, past its walls and up the banks of the Rhine, a huge crowd of onlookers watched them. Some of this crowd were simply curious, others loved excitement, but a great many of them were anguished fathers and mothers who watched with tears in their eyes and sobs in their throats, the army winding its way along the river. Most of the army were boys of the age of Nicholas, about twelve or thirteen, but as in all armies of those days, there were many camp followers. The boys were accompanied by priests, monks, servants, and even nursemaids for the wealthy boys; beggars, harlots, thieves, and rascals of every description, who were waiting to steal and cheat at the first opportunity. These latter the good monk Godfrey mentions in a brief passage:

To whom also, some evil-disposed men joining themselves, nefariously and secretly took from them the things they had brought out, and those which they daily received from the faithful, and went away secretly: one of whom, being taken at Cologne, ended his life on the gallows.

It probably was several hours before the last company marched through the gates of ancient Cologne. At length, however, the children saw Cologne disappearing in the distance and soon were well along the Rhine region of legend and romance. The children from Cologne and the Rhineland were familiar with most of the legends, and enjoyed telling them to the children from more distant parts to whom they were unknown. We can almost see them pointing out the various castles as they trudged along, telling its story as they walked, and at night repeating the legends about the castle at the feet of which they camped.

Shortly after they passed through the town of Bonn, they saw across the river the summits of the Seven Mountains. One of these mountains was pointed out as the Drachenfels, where once dwelt a terrible dragon which lived on human blood and was worshiped as a god by the heathen tribe living at the foot of the rock. One day, two leaders of this tribe, who had captured a beautiful Christian maiden, were about to fight to the death for her possession. The heathen priest, who was angry at the girl for promoting dissension among the leaders,

ordered her bound in front of the dragon's cave and left there to be devoured. Presently, the terrible dragon crawled out of his den, roaring like a tempest, his tail thrashing from side to side, and his eyes spitting fire. The poor maiden in her despair, tore a crucifix from her breast, held it toward the dragon, and called on her Lord to save her. Then a marvelous thing happened. The dragon suddenly raised himself on his tail as if struck by a thunderbolt, fell over backwards into the water, and was never seen again. The heathen tribe, seeing this miracle, freed the fair maiden and sent her back to her own country. She soon returned with a Christian priest who baptized the entire tribe.

This story was a favorite among the young crusaders. They heard also many other stories that thrilled them. They saw the castle, Rolandseck, where Roland once lived, and heard how Roland had gone at the command of the Emperor Charlemagne to fight the infidel Moors, leaving his bride, Hildegunde, behind; how Roland was reported slain but returned finally, only to find that Hildegunde had taken the veil of Heaven and could no longer be his. They saw the castles of the Enemy Brothers who both loved the same woman, and they gazed with awe at the huge Lorelei Rock on the top of which once sat the siren, who lured boatmen to their death by her singing, and was rescued from enraged knights by her father, the River Rhine, which rose to the top of the rock and carried her off in safety.





*Schubert, Hameln*

*The Ratcatcher's House*





Near Bingen they shuddered as they saw the Mouse Tower on a rock in the river, and heard how the cruel Archbishop Hatto, who refused grain to the starving people, was himself devoured by the mice in this very tower.

The children continued their march southward and westward. No town was large enough to accommodate the army. Some of the children were cared for by the kind burghers in their homes, others slept in the streets or upon the broad meadows, or under the shelter of the rocks. Presently, they came to the shores of Lake Lemman and pitched their camp near Geneva. The high Alps now rose before them and beyond the Alps, they knew, lay Italy.

The children had already encountered many hardships before they reached the Alps. Europe in the thirteenth century was very sparsely populated. The roads which led from town to town were devious, in miserable condition and frequently passed through forests and woods infested with robbers, who often fell upon the stragglers, robbed them, beat them and even killed them. Wild beasts roamed the countryside, and the chroniclers tell us they frequently attacked the children, killing and eating them. Bridges were few so that the children were often compelled to ford the streams, and many were drowned. The rich children carried food with them, but the poor ones lived only on the fruit and berries they found growing along the way. Most of them became pitifully undernourished, and many actually died from

starvation. Disease, the result of hardships, and lack of food also thinned their ranks. Many children, discouraged and disheartened, deserted the army and made their way back home as best they could. The numbers of the pilgrims had been reduced by one-half when they reached the Alps. But the stout of heart carried on, singing their song about rescuing the cross and baptizing the infidels, as they camped in the dark shadows of the peaks capped by eternal snow. Their greatest trials were still to come.

In the thirteenth century the principal highway to Italy was through Mount Cenis. This was the same highway that had been crossed on a memorable occasion by a German emperor, Henry IV, on his way to do penance before Pope Gregory VII at Canossa. This historic event has been the symbol for centuries of the supreme power of the Pope, who could force even a mighty monarch to bow in humble submission to the incarnation of Divine Will. Henry's submission and penance were, incidentally, merely a passing mood, for he later drove Gregory from his dominions, set up Clement III as Pope, and was, by him, crowned emperor. Henry at the time, however, saw the necessity of humbling himself before the Pope and, with the empress and her babe, was dragged over the snow on oxhides, lowered on ropes from ledge to ledge, and often slid down steep inclines hanging to a horse whose feet were tied together.

The children again suffered great hardships, but

somehow they managed to cross Mount Cenis, and finally saw before them the plains of sunny Italy. Of their army of twenty thousand, only seven thousand remained, but this remnant was now filled with hope and confidence. They unfurled their banners, raised their crucifixes, and marched down across Piedmont singing their old hymns. Presently, from the summit of a foothill, they looked down and saw before them a large bay like a huge amphitheater and spread out on its slopes the proud city of Genoa with the blue Mediterranean beyond. They were eager for the miracle Nicholas had promised, that the sea should divide and allow them to march to Palestine on dry land. They quickened their pace and hurried on to Genoa.

On the twenty-fifth of August the young crusaders knocked at the gates of Genoa and begged for admission in the name of the Lord. Genoa at that time was at the height of her power, a city of wealth, magnificence, luxury, and culture. The aristocratic senate of the city was amazed and dumfounded at the appearance of this ragged, uncouth army of young fanatics, and regarded them as lunatics. The pathetic and bedraggled appearance of the youngsters seems at first to have touched their sympathies, and hospitality was offered them for five days. The next day, however, the senators repented of their generosity, and ordered them to leave.

The reasons given for the action of the Genoese are various. One principal reason for their hostility

toward the German children was political. The Pope was at odds with the German Emperor, so Genoa, as a papal ally, supported the Pope's cause. The ancient chronicle of Genoa sums up the whole affair in a few words:

The Genoese agreed that they must withdraw from the city, partly because they thought they were prompted by levity more than by necessity; partly because they feared lest they should bring dearth into the city; partly because they apprehended danger to the city from so great a multitude; chiefly because the Emperor was then in rebellion with the Church, and the Genoese clave to the Church against the Emperor. After a short time all that thing came to nothing, because it was founded on nothing.

The youthful crusaders, depressed by the ungracious reception, and still more depressed by the failure of the sea to divide for their passage, marched on and presently reached Pisa. Here they were received with hospitality and kindness, largely because, according to historians, Pisa was a bitter rival of Genoa so, since Genoa had treated the boys as enemies, Pisa was determined to treat them as friends. At Pisa the army seems to have disbanded. Two shiploads sailed for Egypt, but of their fate we know nothing. Most of the army broke up into small bands which were later seen in Florence, in Arezzo, in Perugia, and in Siena, where their appearance excited great curiosity and wonder. One group, hardier than the rest, made their way to Rome, where they were received by the Pope. He treated them kindly, pointed out the folly

of their enterprise, and told them to return to their homes until they were grown men, when he would call upon them to fulfil their pledge and join a crusade to the Holy Land.

This was the end of the crusade preached by the boy, Nicholas. The chroniclers are silent as to the fate of the boys. Some doubtless, returned home, others remained in Italy. Some of their descendants are probably among those fair-haired and blue-eyed Italians who still inhabit northern Italy. The crusade of Nicholas, as one writer has said, "left nothing behind it but an after-echo in the legend of the Pied Piper of Hameln."

The story of the Children's Crusade does not, however, begin nor end with Nicholas. Similar events were occurring in France at the same time. The soil, as in Germany, was fertile for the growth of the epidemic. The people were distressed, harassed, poor, and miserable. The imaginations had been excited by the Pope's constant insistence on a crusade. This excitement had been transmitted to the children.

In the town of Cloyes in Vendôme, lived a poor shepherd boy named Stephen. Until he was twelve years of age, nothing distinguished him from the other peasant boys who spent their days guarding sheep in the fields. Although he could neither read nor write, he was certainly, as later events proved, a lad of talent. He had heard tales of returned crusaders, of their sufferings and privations, and was

deeply distressed at the thought that the Holy Land was in the hands of the infidels.

On St. Mark's Day, April 25th, the Church observed a ceremony called the Greater Litany. On this day the altars in all churches were draped in black, and processions of priests and people moved through the towns chanting, and carrying crosses likewise draped in black. This litany had become, in the twelfth century, a litany or general supplication for those poor crusaders beleaguered in the Holy Land, for those captured and sold into slavery, and for the souls of those who had fallen in battle for the Holy Sepulcher. On St. Mark's Day, 1212, Stephen saw such a procession in the neighboring city of Chartres. The black-robed procession carrying shrouded crosses, the sad chants of the priests, the tears and lamentations of the people all moved the shepherd boy profoundly. He returned home depressed and brooding over the state of Christendom.

Soon afterwards, a man dressed as a pilgrim came to Stephen, asked for food, and then revealed to the astonished lad that he was Christ, and had come to commission Stephen to preach a crusade among the children, to raise an army of children and to rescue the Holy Sepulcher. He gave Stephen a letter to the King of France, commanding him to furnish supplies and to aid the youth in every way. The strange pilgrim then disappeared as mysteriously as he had come. Stephen returned to his sheep and, to his



amazement, they all bent their forelegs, knelt on the ground, and worshiped him. This was additional proof that he had had a divine visitation.

The boy told his story to his family and to almost everybody in Cloyes. All were deeply impressed and had no doubt that the boy had really had a visitation from the Savior Himself. Later historians have surmised that the mysterious pilgrim may have been one of those numerous monks whom the Pope had sent throughout Christendom to stir up enthusiasm for the crusades. In instigating a boys' crusade we wonder, however, whether he had not exceeded his instructions. Stephen, fired with zeal and confident of his divine mission, now determined to go to St. Denis and preach the crusade from this hallowed spot.

St. Denis, a little town five miles north of Paris, contained the tomb of St. Denis, the first Bishop of Paris. He had suffered martyrdom under the reign of Valerian and had become the patron saint of France. In the fifth century, a church was built over his tomb, a church which became the last resting place of the kings of France. This church contained not only the relics of the saint, but also the sacred oriflamme, or national banner of France, a flag of red and gold, which the kings of France on special occasion carried into battle. At this time, it hung over the tomb of St. Denis.

Thousands of pilgrims came from all over France to worship at the shrine of St. Denis, not only the



devout who came to pray, but the sick and infirm who hoped for a miracle at his tomb. In time, as always, the legends about the saint multiplied, the one most generally believed being the story that the saint was beheaded and thrown into the river Seine, but crawled out carrying his head in his hands and walked, still carrying his head, until he reached the spot where he desired to be buried, and then gently deposited it upon the ground.

Stephen preached to the pilgrims, told them of his interview with the Savior, and showed them his letter to the king. He pointed out the tomb of St. Denis, a follower of Christ, revered in a Christian church, and contrasted it with the tomb of the Savior defiled by the infidels. He did even more, if we are to trust the chroniclers—he healed the sick, the lame, and the blind. He became the saint of the day; his name was soon on every one's tongue; the pilgrims told of him when they returned home, and his fame rapidly spread throughout France and with it the same contagion that had spread through Germany.

Soon France was filled with troops of boys and girls, marching from town to town singing, "Lord, Lord, restore to us the true and holy Cross." The contagion spread like wild-fire. Parents were unable to restrain their children who slipped away from their homes and marched off with the little crusaders.

The King of France, to whom Stephen had his famous letter, was much perplexed by these events.

He was warned by some of his counselors that if the children persisted in their mad venture, thousands of young lives would be lost, and nothing accomplished. Other advisers pointed out, however, that the Pope might sanction the crusade and, if the King opposed it, complications could ensue. The King, in his perplexity, referred the matter to the University of Paris, whose learned doctors replied that the movement should be stopped, by force if necessary. The King, thereupon, issued a decree that the children should return to their homes and give up their mad enterprise. No one paid the slightest attention to the decree, and the King seems to have soon forgotten it himself, so immersed was he in other affairs.

In the latter part of June, the child crusaders assembled at Vendôme under the command of their leader, Stephen. The little town of Vendôme could not hold this army which numbered thirty thousand and dotted the fields for miles around the town. After some delay, the army began its march, singing hymns, carrying crucifixes, and waving banners. Many priests marched in the procession, swinging smoking censers, and there was the same contingent of camp followers, thieves, beggars, and harlots as in Germany. Stephen, as the prophet of the Lord, did not walk as a humble pilgrim, but rode in a magnificent chariot, drawn by splendid horses, and was surrounded by a picked body-guard composed of young nobles mounted on chargers, who vied with each other in carrying out his commands.

The French children passed through a very different country from that traversed by Nicholas and his crusaders. There were no forests in which wild beasts were lurking, no deep streams to ford, no snow-capped Alpine peaks to scale. True, some became discouraged and turned back, others fell ill and dropped by the wayside, but one month later the army only slightly reduced in numbers reached Marseilles, and saw the Mediterranean stretched out at their feet. They rushed eagerly to the shore expecting the miracle that Stephen had promised them, that the sea would divide and they would march on dry land to Palestine. But the waves rolled in and rolled out, and no miracle took place.

The children were received kindly in Marseilles and well taken care of by the inhabitants. The crusaders waited several days, and then became impatient. Dissension appeared, and the boys began to complain against their leader, Stephen, who had promised that the sea would open up and provide a safe passage to Palestine. Every day they went down to the seashore, but the waves rolled on as before and no pathway through them appeared. The discontent grew. The boys cursed their leader, proclaimed their intention of returning home, and were making preparations to abandon their crusade when a wonderful event happened which restored their confidence in Stephen and which seemed to that lad like a direct intervention from Heaven.

There lived at that time in Marseilles two mer-

chants who had amassed vast fortunes by trade. Their names, according to the ancient chroniclers who wrote in latin, were Hugo Ferreus or Hugh the Hardhearted and William Porcus, or William the Swine. Just how these worthy merchants had acquired these unusual names, we do not know, possibly they sounded better in that age than they do now. These rich merchants said they had seen the disappointment and despair of the young crusaders and had been deeply moved by their distress. Wishing to help them, the two merchants offered to provide vessels to carry the youngsters to Palestine. They added they were doing this *Causa Dei, absque pretio* (for the cause of God and without price).

All Marseilles rejoiced in the good news. The people of Marseilles were proud of the generosity and wealth of two of their fellow citizens: the children rejoiced that their prayers had been answered and that they would soon tread the sacred soil of the Holy Land. Stephen assured them that this was the miracle he had promised.

In due time, the vessels were assembled, seven in all, and the day of departure dawned. The young crusaders rose early, thronged the churches where they received blessing and absolution, and went to the docks, where a vast crowd had gathered to witness their departure. The youngsters went aboard in groups, each group carrying its banner and crucifixes and attended by several priests. The sailors went to their posts, the port holes were closed, the

anchors weighed and the ships, their white sails bulging in the breeze, sailed out across the bay, while the priests chanted the age-old hymn, *Veni Creator Spiritus*, still sung in our churches as "Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire."

As the seven ships sailed out into the unknown, the crowd assembled on the shore wondered what fate held in store for them. Their suspense was to be of long duration. Years passed, but no tidings came. Each traveler, merchant, crusader, and monk who returned from the East was asked if he had any news of the fate of the youthful crusaders, but each shook his head. The young crusaders had sailed out into the unknown, and disappeared without leaving a trace.

Finally in the year 1230, eighteen years after their departure, an aged priest landed, who said he was one of the priests who had sailed forth with the young crusaders from Marseilles. Two days after their departure a severe storm arose, which drove two of the ships on the rocks off the island of San Pietro. These ships were beaten to pieces and all of the passengers drowned. The five other ships were all steered to the ports of Bougie in Algiers and Alexandria in Egypt, where the children were sold as slaves to the Saracens. The rich merchants of Marseilles, Hugh the Hardhearted and William the Swine had been, after all, well named, for they had not been philanthropists at all but slave-dealers, and had amassed their fortunes in this trade. They were

still living in Marseilles and richer than ever, but justice now speedily overtook them. The Emperor Frederick hanged both on the same gallows in Sicily, where they had gone to plot against him.

Pope Gregory IX, touched by the sad story of the little shipwrecked crusaders, built a church on the island of San Pietro in their memory, which was christened the Church of the New Innocents. Alberic, monk of Liège, wrote in the sixteenth century that "there are in that church the bodies of the children which the sea threw up there, and to this day they are shown to pilgrims uncorrupted." This church fell into decay with the centuries, but was re-discovered in 1869 by Newton Perkins, an art student, who made a sketch of it.

Two other child pilgrimages are known but details concerning them are very meager. One pilgrimage was from the city of Erfurt in 1237, when a group of a thousand children, singing and dancing, started across the country. They were overtaken by the parents the following day, and after being carried back home, suffered from trembling and convulsions. Various writers have pointed out a similarity with the Dancing Mania. The second pilgrimage occurred in the year 1458, when one hundred children left Hall, in Swabia, and made a pilgrimage to Mont San Michel in Normandy, situated, as the old chronicler wrote, "in the middle of the Sea, when the sea divided itself each day, the boys went through with their feet dry."



Looking back in retrospect upon the children's crusades or pilgrimages, as some have called them, there seems to be no reason to dispute the opinion of the older authorities that they were like the Dancing Mania, hysterical affections. As such, their failure could have been predicted in advance, or, to quote Father Jacobo de Voragine of the Order of the preaching Friars, or Dominicans, who saw the boy crusaders at Genoa, "All that thing came to nothing, because it was founded on nothing."



## *Chapter V*

### THE BLOODY HOST

ITALY, between the Tiber and the Arno, is a country full of contrasts. The hurried tourist, after days of arduous sight-seeing through the galleries of Florence, boards his train, settles down in his compartment, and pays but scant attention as his train speeds on to Rome. The more leisurely traveler who has the time at his disposal finds this section one of the most interesting regions of Italy, if not of all Europe. This country of the hill towns is the heart of ancient Etruria, once a powerful nation, whose warlike lords ruled Rome and whose gifted architects built the Servian Wall, the Capitoline temple and the great Cloaca Maxima, the most famous sewer in all history. Like many great nations of the past, Etruria slowly grew in power, reached its peak and then rapidly declined. Its famous, or infamous, King Tarquin the Proud was the last king of Rome, and with his downfall, Etruria disappears from the pages of history.

The hill towns of to-day show little trace of their

Etruscan origin. It is medieval Italy, and not the Italy of pre-Roman times, that the traveler sees. Just how many of these hill towns there are, no one seems to know. At any rate, there is one capping almost every hillock, all from the distance presenting a close similarity, with their encircling walls and ancient towers, yet each within its own walls revealing its own distinctive individuality and charm. From without they resemble walled fortresses ready to resist the ruthless invader, and even within, the heavy walls of the larger houses with their turrets and loopholes impress the visitor with the fact that in medieval days, every man's home was also his castle and fortress.

These walled towns are often so close together that from the walls of one the towers of the next may easily be seen, while from a high vantage spot some half-dozen of these towns are visible. A modern guide book describes some twenty-three of these towns as worthy of especial study: among them, Siena with its famous Palazzo Pubblico; San Gimignano, the city of towers; Assisi, the town of St. Francis; Perugia, the most magnificent of all; and Orvieto, whose marble cathedral possesses a façade described as the most perfect example of Italian Gothic art.

From a distance, Orvieto presents much the same picture as her sister towns, brown, grim, rising from the barren rocks like a mighty fortress which has withstood a hundred sieges and can withstand a hundred more. Once within these grim and massive

walls the scene changes abruptly, and softens under the spell of the cathedral, a building of exquisite symmetry, fashioned of delicately tinted marbles with a façade of mosaics whose brilliant figures and patterns excite the wonder and admiration to-day as they did centuries ago. Within the cathedral are some of the finest and best-preserved frescoes in all Italy, the work mainly of Fra Angelico, that great artist who declined an archbishopric to devote himself to painting, and of Signorelli, who was both teacher and inspirer of the immortal Michelangelo. Indeed, some assert that Michelangelo's demons and angels in the Sistine Chapel are but copies of Signorelli's frescoes at Orvieto. These frescoes of Fra Angelico and of Signorelli deserve well the praise they have received, but the visitor with a taste for the unusual finds even more interest in the frescoes of Ugolino in the Cappella del Corporale, or the Chapel of the Holy Corporal, which depicts the curious history of the founding of this cathedral.

According to this history, the cathedral dates its founding from the miracle witnessed by the monk Pietro who lived in the adjacent town of Bolsena. Details regarding the birth, habits, and tastes of this monk, who lived during the middle of the thirteenth century, have not been preserved for us. We do not know whether he was inordinately fond of the delights of the table and of the cellar, or whether he was intellectually too curious. At any rate, he gradually fell into one of the gravest errors of his time—

he became skeptical of the claims of the Church of which he was a priest. His crowning sin was a disbelief in the central dogma upon which his faith was supposed to rest, that upon consecration the bread of the mass was changed into the actual body of Christ, a dogma known among theologians as the doctrine of transubstantiation. An assault upon this dogma, we recall, was one of the main attacks made later by Martin Luther in his effort to overthrow completely the papacy.

In our imagination, we can easily reconstruct the torments of mind this skepticism must have caused the priest Pietro, as well as its effect upon the devout members of his brotherhood, when the fact became known that one of their own members doubted this, the cornerstone of their common faith.

One day, in the year 1264, while the skeptical Pietro was celebrating mass in the old church at Bolsena, he looked upon the sacred bread and, to his amazement, saw upon it large drops of blood. Terrified by this apparition, he fell to his knees and implored divine forgiveness for having ever doubted the sacred mystery of transubstantiation. He had seen the consecrated bread turned into the actual body of Christ and upon this body, blood itself had appeared.

Pietro's conversion was received with joy by his fellow monks, but the miracle itself astonished them even more. The news soon spread to the adjoining

city of Orvieto, where the Pope, Urban IV, was sojourning. Indeed, Urban IV spent most of his pontificate at Orvieto and, according to history, never visited Rome during his lifetime. A Frenchman by birth, he was elected Pope while on a visit to Italy and, as he was Pope but three years, he somehow never found time to go to Rome. Pope Urban IV was tremendously impressed by the news and ordered that the miraculous bloody Host and the penitent monk, Pietro, appear before him at Orvieto. The following day a procession of priests with the penitent Pietro walked to Orvieto carrying the bloody Host in solemn procession, and the Pope saw the miracle with his own eyes. The Pope ordered the construction of a cathedral at Orvieto to commemorate the event, and within its walls we see two frescoes, one showing the monk Pietro discovering the miraculous bloody Host, and the other depicting the solemn procession which appeared before the Pope carrying the Host.

The good Pope never lived to see his cathedral built. He died the same year, but his successors executed his commands and, after some two or three centuries, it was completed, a dazzling memorial to the conversion of Pietro through the miracle wrought before his eyes.

Urban IV, according to historians, was noteworthy for having introduced French predominance in the papacy, which some forty years later brought the papal court to Avignon, and for having established

the feast of Corpus Christi in the Roman Catholic Church. The history of this festival is not without interest.

In the diocese of Liège there lived, in the thirteenth century, a certain prioress, Julienne. Julienne had a vision which revealed to her the necessity of establishing a festival in honor of the Real Presence of Christ in the Host. This would reaffirm to the world the Catholic belief in the doctrine of transubstantiation. The bishop of Liège instituted the festival, but it remained only a local affair. The archdeacon of this diocese was Jacques Pantaléon who later was Pope Urban IV. As Pope, he was still a firm patron of the fast which had been instituted in Liège, but still hesitated about declaring this feast for the Church at large. The miracle of Bolsena decided him. He ordered the establishment of the festival of Corpus Christi on the first Thursday after Trinity Sunday, and it has been celebrated on that date every year for more than six centuries. Thus, this sacred festival, one of the most splendid and colorful of the Church is, in a sense, the child of the miracle of Bolsena.

The miracle of Bolsena was not, however, the only one of its kind recorded in history, either sacred or profane. This phenomenon of blood on bread was described some three hundred years before the birth of Christ, and more than fifteen hundred years before the time of the monk Pietro.

In the year 333 B.C., Alexander the Great, starting



out to conquer the world, swept into Syria with his armies and laid siege to Tyre. One day, while walking through his camp, his soldiers handed him bread, which, when broken open, showed spots of blood. The king was terrified at this apparition, and saw in it a clear warning to raise the siege. The priest Aristander was called, however, and asked to explain the omen. The priest assured the king that it was a good omen and, since the blood was inside the bread, it signified that misfortune would befall the soldiers within the city. Alexander the Great, reassured by the priest, regained his confidence and renewed his assaults upon the city. Aristander's interpretation proved to be correct. Shortly afterwards, the Macedonians captured the city, slew 8,000 Tyrians and sold 30,000 into slavery. Tyre never again was reckoned as a powerful or important city. To-day the small Syrian town of Sur, a village of some five thousand people, is all that remains of the glory of ancient Tyre.

Occasional references to this phenomenon of the blood bread are found in the annals of ancient Rome. By far the greater number of accounts, however, are in some way related to the practice of the Christian religion, and particularly to the mystery associated with the mass in the church. Many of these antedate by many years the miracle of Bolsena. All of them are described as miracles, for the very obvious reason that no other explanation could be advanced. Some of these miracles led to a strengthening of the faith



of the believers; others led to terrible persecution of the unbelievers.

In 1199, a woman in Augsburg, instead of eating the consecrated bread during communion, held it in her mouth and hastened home with it. Once safely in her own house, she removed the bread from her mouth, covered it with wax and kept it as a kind of household god, to bring good fortune to her home and to keep away the evil spirits. In time, however, her conscience smote her for secretly carrying it away from the church, so she contritely carried it back, and made a full confession to the priest. The good father listened to her confession, gave her absolution and then removed the wax covering. To his astonishment and to the terror of his penitent, the consecrated bread had "turned to real flesh and blood." The bloody Host was placed in the Holy Cross Monastery, and people came from far and wide to gaze upon the miracle.

Not long after this, a similar miracle occurred in the distant kingdom of Valencia. The Saracens were besieging the castle of Chum. Before the day's fighting began, the Christians within the castle celebrated Holy Communion. Their devotions were interrupted by a sudden attack of the besieging Saracens. The battle raged furiously, and finally the Christians beat off the attacking force. The priest, meanwhile, because of the interruption of the service, had wrapped the consecrated bread in a damp linen cloth and placed it on the altar. After the battle was over,

the soldiers and the priest returned to the chapel to resume the interrupted service. When the cloth was removed from the consecrated bread, they found it covered with blood. The priest and the worshipers were undecided as to what they should do with the miraculous bread. Finally, they took a mule which had been captured from the Saracens, placed the bloody Host upon his back and turned him loose upon the road. The mule went directly to the town of Daroca, the birthplace of the priest, and fell down dead after passing through the gates of the town. The bloody miraculous Host was placed in a chapel there and, according to the ancient account, remained fresh and red for a long time.

The bloody Host throughout the Middle Ages was the awe-inspiring object of veneration and of adoration. The Host itself, as the body of Our Lord, was the center of the Church's worship, and when it bled, the combined emotions of worship and of fear were unleashed. This sacred object of Christian worship was often profaned by the Jews, if contemporary accounts are to be trusted. The old ecclesiastical annals are filled with the stories of such profanations.

In the year 1399, near the town of Posen, a maid-servant, oppressed by poverty and hard work, sold the Host which she had taken from the church to a group of Jews. The Jews, after cursing the Host, stuck it with a dagger and blood flowed from it. Later, they threw it into a swamp. A shepherd boy, passing by, saw the Host flying about in the air, and

also observed that some oxen near-by kneeled reverently as it passed. He reported it to the authorities who made an investigation and discovered the guilty parties. The maid and the Jews were burned at the stake, and in honor of this event, the Carmelite monks for years celebrated a church festival on that date. Three hundred years later, the miraculous Host was still preserved and worshiped at Posen.

A similar occurrence, told with great detail by the historian, took place in Sternberg, Mecklenburg, in the year 1492. An immoral priest, one Peter Däne, owed the Jew, Eleazar, a sum of money, and in payment of his debt, gave the Jew two Hosts, which he himself had consecrated. Eleazar and some of his friends placed one of the Hosts upon a table, cursed it and stuck it with their daggers, whereupon a quantity of blood ran out and stained the tablecloth. The Jews, who were enjoying the proceedings immensely, were later terrified when the wounded Host flew into the air and circled around the table. The wife of Eleazar, more courageous than her husband, seized the Host, wrapped it in a cloth and carried it back to the priest. Father Peter, conscience-stricken, reported the affair to the authorities, who condemned all of the Jews to death. Shortly afterwards, twenty Jews were burned at the stake on a near-by hill, which to this day is known as the Judenberg. Nor did the priest escape. He was later burned alone, for his part in the sacrilege.

These are but two of the numerous histories of



*The Procession to Orvieto*

[By Ugolino di Prete Ilario]



*Corpus Christi Day in Venice*

[By Gentile Bellini, 1429-1507]





the bloody Host that have come down to us from that period. If we are to believe some of these ancient chroniclers, one of the common pastimes of the Jews was to obtain the sacred Host, curse it, and stab it until the blood ran. And if the punishment for such a frivolous pastime seems extreme, we must remember that sacrilege was one of the deadliest sins that could be committed. The early canons of the Church give much attention to sacrilege. The worst sacrilege of all, defiling the Host, was punished by death, accompanied by the cruelest and most ignominious tortures. Under the reign of the Emperor Charles V, the penalty for stealing the Host was death at the stake. If this legislation seems to belong only to the Middle Ages, it is instructive to learn that in France, as late as 1766, a citizen, who wore his hat while a religious procession was passing, was sentenced to be tortured, to have his tongue cut out, to be beheaded, and then to be burned. This sentence was confirmed by the parliament of Paris and approved by King Louis XV. Indeed, death for sacrilege in France was only expressly forbidden in 1832.

The ecclesiastical authorities felt that they had good Biblical grounds for punishing sacrilege so severely, and indeed they had. They had warrant for their actions back in the days when Joshua captured Jericho. At this famous siege, the Lord told Joshua that, "all the silver and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, are consecrated unto the Lord; they shall come into the treasury of the Lord." But one Achan



saw among the booty some Babylonish garments and gold and silver, and coveting them, buried them in the ground under his tent. For this sacrilege he was brought before the people with his sons, daughters, oxen, asses, sheep, and all that he had and "All Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones," and after these events, "The Lord turned from the fierceness of his anger." With this precedent we can, perhaps, understand the uncompromising attitude of the judges in Posen, in Sternberg, and in Paris.

While the miracle of the bloody Host and its attendant worship usually received the support and patronage of the ecclesiastical authorities, there were certain notable exceptions. In the town of Wilsnack in Germany, the priest of the parish church found three bloody Hosts upon the altar. The news of the miracle spread rapidly, and soon throngs of pilgrims from all Germany, from England, Scotland, and Scandinavia came to Wilsnack to see the Miracle of Wilsnack.

Cardinal Nicholas Cusanus, the famous German scholar and theologian, heard of these pilgrimages to Wilsnack. Cusanus is remembered by medical historians as a pioneer in science. He taught that the earth moved and was not the center of the universe, and he suggested to doctors that they count the pulse and respiration of their patients and weigh their blood and urine. He is best remembered, however,

as a papal legate charged with reforming the church and monastic life in Germany.

Cusanus called a synod at Magdeburg and declared before the assembled clergy that "The believers hold the red of the Host for the blood of Christ, and the priests not only permit this belief, they even support it because of the money which flows into their coffers. The Catholic faith teaches us that the transfigured body of Christ has a transfigured blood, which is invisible." He forbade the pilgrimages to Wilsnack and the worship of the bloody Host.

As we look through the ancient records, we find that the miraculous appearance of blood was not confined to the Host. Blood also appeared from time to time upon other sacred objects. In the little Rhine village of St. Goar, in 1204, blood suddenly appeared upon a crucifix whose Christ had been wounded by soldiers marching through the town. In England soon afterwards, the bones of St. Thomas, which had just been removed there, were found to be bleeding; and responsible eye-witnesses related that the blood flowed in sufficient quantity to stain the cloths in which the bones were wrapped. Numerous accounts are preserved of holy pictures upon which blood appeared miraculously.

For centuries, apparently, these miracles were associated only with sacred objects. The appearance of the blood was seen only upon the Host or upon objects connected with worship. The priests, awe-stricken by the miracle, found faith renewed as did

Pietro of Bolsena and gave thanks to God for the miracle, and the people joined in the thanksgiving. Later, however, this miraculous appearance of blood did not confine itself to sacred things, but began to appear upon objects of ordinary daily life, and with such increasing frequency that the more intelligent came to regard it rather as a phenomenon than as a miracle.

In 1819, in Legnaro near Padua, a peasant named Pittarello found, one morning, that a dish of polenta was covered with small, red spots like drops of blood. He promptly threw the polenta away, but on the following morning found that a fresh dish of polenta which had been prepared the night before also showed red spots. He was now thoroughly alarmed and called the priest, who blessed the home with the ceremonies of the church. The following day, however, the bloody spots appeared upon other food. The priest was again called and, after advising fasting and prayers, gave the members of the household the Holy Sacrament. The next day a chicken which had been prepared for dinner was found to be covered with bloody spots.

The news of these remarkable events soon spread far and wide over the countryside. Thousands of people of all ages and of both sexes were soon swarming upon the road to Legnaro, on their way to visit the house of Pittarello, where all of these wonderful things had happened. The masses were impelled by curiosity admixed with terror to see this accursed

place and this accursed man who had certainly committed some great sin for which the Lord was punishing him. The priest continued his visitations to the house and his attempts to exorcise the devil who was there.

Among those who made the pilgrimage to Legnaro was a certain Dr. Sette. Dr. Sette was a student of natural history and had for some time been interested in the study of molds, most of which as is well known produce, on growing, green or black spots. He conceived the idea that this phenomenon might be due to some new species of mold which produced red spots.

Sette soon realized that the poor peasant Pittarello was regarded by his neighbors as accursed, and that the frequent visits of the priest to the Pittarello home increased the terror and apprehension of the people. Convinced that the priest was spreading superstition in the community, Sette adopted a clever stratagem. He secured some of the red substance from the house of Pittarello and surreptitiously introduced it into the home of the priest. A few days later the worthy father was dumfounded to find the red spots appearing on his food. The news of this occurrence spread throughout the town and created a sensation. The townspeople soon divided into two camps, one group was certain that the priest himself was guilty of some great sin; while the other group, deeply attached to the worthy priest, argued that these red spots had nothing to do with sin. What

the priest himself said on this occasion has not been recorded, but it is recorded that the bishop forbade the priest to perform any further rites in connection with the affair. Thus far, Sette was successful, he had stopped the exorcising in the home of Pittarello, and he had planted in the minds of the priests' partizans the thought that this occurrence was not a supernatural phenomenon.

Dr. Sette was now free to continue his investigations and shortly afterwards demonstrated to a scientific commission that these red spots consisted of a living material which could be transplanted from one substance to another, and he demonstrated with polenta, rice, codfish, chicken, beef, and bread, upon all of which he had produced red spots. He stated it was produced by a new genus of red mold, which he christened with the rather formidable name of *zaogalactina imetrofa*. The miracle of Bolsena was, according to him, no miraculous occurrence at all, but simply a normal natural phenomena. Sette published his conclusions in a paper which appeared in 1824.

Some twenty years later, the good burghers of Berlin were dumfounded to find blood spots upon their bread. The Royal Academy of Sciences immediately took notice of this phenomenon and one of the members, Herr Ehrenburg, armed with his microscope and with a copy of Signor Sette's report, went forth to study this apparition. His report was read before the Academy on October 26, 1848, in

which he proved that the reddish jelly-like masses which grew on the bread were really masses of small red animalculæ, to which he gave the name of *Monas prodigiosa*. He measured these small organisms, calculated that one cubic inch contained 884,736,000,000,000 of them, stated that they could be seen only under the microscope with a magnification of 300 diameters and that they were in constant movement.

When the new science of bacteriology was born under the stimulus of Pasteur and Koch, bacteriologists studied anew these organisms which produced the red pigment. To-day they are classified as a chromogenic, or pigment-producing bacteria, and every beginning medical student of bacteriology is familiar with the *Bacillus prodigiosus* which grows so readily with the production of a brilliant red pigment.

Was the miracle of Bolsena really a miracle? Here again all depends upon definition. The dictionary states that a miracle is "a wonderful thing; something that excites wonder, or astonishment." Well, the events of Bolsena and at Padua certainly measure up to this definition. But David Hume in his *Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding* defines a miracle as "a violation of the laws of nature." There is no violation here. The *Bacillus prodigiosus* produces red pigment just as surely as the sun produces light.

The Church, which once promulgated the Feast of Corpus Christi in honor of the miracle of Bolsena, seems less tolerant to-day in regard to similar mira-



cles. According to the *Corriere della Serra* of July 11, 1937:

The Congregation of the Holy Office has given sentence in regard to the pretended miracle which happened the 26th of July 1936, at Paganico Sabino, in the province of Rieti, according to which, during the celebration of mass, the priest Raffaele Codipietro, in breaking the Sacred Host, noted that some drops of blood gushed forth which spotted the corporal and the sacred linen. The Congregation has declared that the pretended miracle is false; the priest Raffaele Codipietro, author of the "simulated sacrilege" has been declared therefore in major excommunication. He has been also reduced, as a penalty, to the status of a layman, in perpetuity.

But regardless of the *Bacillus prodigiosus* and its rôle in sacred history the Feast of Corpus Christi has for centuries past and we hope will, for centuries to come, inspire men to keep in sacred and tender reverence, One with whose precepts no one has yet found fault.

## *Chapter VI*

### THE MIRACLE OF KONNERSREUTH

IN January, 1938, the American newspapers described the attempt of the Rev. Israel Harding to attain immortality by fasting. Mr. Harding was dean of the Episcopal Cathedral at Memphis and an able and much beloved clergyman in that city. Having undertaken a partial fast two years before, during the month of January he partook of no food or drink, but subsisted entirely upon the Holy Communion which he took daily in the cathedral. Toward the end of the month Mr. Harding, "ghostly, shrunked to a mere half of his former 200 pounds," collapsed and was taken to a hospital where forced feeding was instituted. The bishop of the diocese removed him from his post until such time as he had recovered his health and was able to resume his duties. Several months of hospital care restored the dean to his former mental and physical health.

This dramatic episode in contemporary American ecclesiastical life draws the attention of puzzled scientists and clergymen anew to the case of a simple

peasant girl in Bavaria. This girl is Therese Neumann who lives in Konnersreuth, a little village in northern Bavaria. According to reputable witnesses, Therese has not eaten solid food for sixteen years and has not taken appreciable liquid in twelve. Her history recalls similar accounts which have come down to us through the centuries, stories of persons whom the Church has canonized as saints but whom skeptics, shrugging their shoulders, have denounced as impostors. The story of Therese Neumann can not, however, be dismissed with a shrug of the shoulders. Many sincere clergymen and physicians, after studying her at Konnesreuth, have departed puzzled and baffled, but consoling themselves with the oft-quoted phrase of Hamlet that "there are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

Therese Neumann was born in the year 1898 of peasant stock. Her father tills the soil and is also a tailor. Therese, as the eldest of ten children, was always very busy helping her mother with her household duties and with the care of the younger children. She was bright and industrious and learned well at school, but has always been of a retiring disposition. When twenty-nine years of age, she related that she had never visited a fair, had never danced and had never taken a ride on a railway train.

During the World War, Therese became much depressed. Her father was called to the colors and all the young men of the village were at the front. She



*Therese Neumann*

[From Fritz Gerlich, *Die Stigmatisierte Therese Neumann*, Munich, 1929]



*The Stigmatization of St. Catherine of Siena*

[By Sano di Pietro]



obtained a position as a maid in the home of one of the better-to-do peasants. During her term of service there, a fire broke out in the neighbor's home and Therese assisted in fighting the fire by passing buckets of water to the men above. While carrying on this work she was seized with a severe pain in the back and was unable to straighten up. Shortly afterwards, she became weak, could not sleep and was finally admitted as a patient in a neighboring hospital where she had "attacks," and several times vomited blood.

Shortly after leaving the hospital, Therese noted shimmering lights before her eyes and the old pain reappeared in her back. She became unable to walk, took to her bed and soon afterwards was paralyzed in both legs. From time to time, she lost her voice and then recovered it, and also had attacks of deafness, lasting three or four days at a time. Then she became totally blind.

While Therese lay in bed, blind and with both legs paralyzed, her father developed rheumatism which interfered with his earning the daily bread. Therese prayed to her patron saint, St. Theresa, that she, as a little daughter, be allowed to suffer for her father. The next day her left hand and left arm were paralyzed and drawn tightly against her breast. They remained in this position for three months. Some time later, a young theological student of whom Theresa was very fond, was advised to abandon his studies because of throat disease. Therese prayed to



her patron saint that she be permitted to suffer in place of the prospective priest. The following morning she was unable to swallow, and since that time has taken no solid nourishment.

For five years Therese Neumann lay on her bed, blind, and paralyzed. Then, on April 29, 1923, the day upon which the announcement was made that St. Theresa of the Child Jesus would be canonized, Therese Neumann suddenly opened her eyes and was able to see. According to the popular story, Therese saw a dazzling light and heard the voice of her patron saint say, "Do you wish to see again, dear child?" Immediately her sight was restored. The accounts of her doctors are more prosaic. According to them, she upbraided her little brother for something he was doing, and the lad answered, "But you can't see that at all." Therese then observed, to her astonishment, that she could see.

Two years later, on the very day that the Pope and the cardinals assembled at Rome for the ceremony of the canonization of St. Theresa, Therese Neumann arose from her bed and walked. Her paralysis was healed.

For a short time she was apparently well, but a few months afterwards was suddenly taken ill and Dr. Seidl, the family physician, was called. He found she was suffering from an attack of acute appendicitis and prepared for an operation. Just as suddenly Therese recovered and told the physician she had passed a quantity of pus. The physician diagnosed

an appendix abscess, healed by bursting into the large intestine, an occurrence which is far from rare.

Therese had now experienced three remarkable events. She had been suddenly healed of her blindness, of paralysis, and of the more prosaic appendicitis. The villagers began to talk of these miraculous happenings. But more were yet to come. During Holy Week of 1926, Therese went into an ecstasy, or trance, during which she witnessed the agony of Christ on the cross. As she saw His terrible suffering, bloody tears began to course down her cheeks and when "one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side," a wound appeared in her side, and blood began to trickle from it. When she had recovered from her ecstasy, people around her noted that she had bloody wounds on her hands and feet just as the nails had produced wounds on the hands and feet of Christ when He was nailed to the cross. These wounds, or stigmata, remained.

At Christmas of the same year, Therese, who had taken only liquid nourishment for three years, lost all desire for food and ceased taking even liquid nourishment. Since that date, according to reputable authorities, she has taken only the small wafer of her daily Holy Communion.

For the past twelve years, Therese Neumann has suffered the Passion of Christ every Friday. At half an hour after midnight she sinks back upon her bed apparently lifeless, blood flows from her eyes and from the wound in her side. During this period, she

often describes the Crucifixion in great detail, and repeats the conversation of Christ, employing not German words, but Aramaic, the dialect of Hebrew which Christ spoke. Friday evening she rises from her bed and Saturday morning works again in her garden, apparently recovered, but wearing gloves to cover the stigmata on her hands.

The remarkable case of Therese Neumann has attracted attention far and wide. Thousands of people, clergymen, pilgrims, doctors, scientists, and skeptics have gone to the little town of Konnersreuth to witness these strange occurrences and to see the woman who bears in her side and on her hands and feet, the wounds of Christ. On one Friday in August, 1927, 4,000 visitors were counted in the little hamlet, drawn there by these miraculous events. Her ecstasy, the bloody tears, the stigmata, and her remarkable abstinence from food, have been the subject of numerous articles and books, and the object of endless discussion and debate. The Church has persistently refused to give its official recognition to the modern miracle, although the village priest, who has known Therese since her childhood, is convinced that her experiences are supernatural events.

The strange experiences of Therese Neumann, while exceptional, are not unique. A strikingly similar occurrence took place in Bois d'Haine, a little village in Belgium, in the year 1869. One Friday, a young woman, Louise Lateau, noticed that blood was flowing from her side. After a few hours it

ceased. The following Thursday morning, she noticed pinkish spots on the palm and back of each hand and on the upper surface of each foot. The next day, Friday, blood again flowed from her side, and also from the spots on her hands and feet. This flow of blood ceased on Saturday.

Every Thursday, these spots appeared, and every Friday blood flowed from her hands, feet, and side. During this period, Louise lay in ecstasy. Her facial expression changed strikingly from time to time. It registered contemplation, happiness, contentment, fear, terror, and horror. After the ecstasy, she related that she had seen the crucifixion of Christ and described it in great detail. She saw the Savior, His mother, the apostles, and the Roman soldier who thrust his spear into Christ's side.

In 1927, Professor Ewald, professor of psychiatry in the University of Erlangen, made one of the most careful studies of Therese Neumann. Ewald, who has considered her case both objectively and sympathetically is, first of all, convinced that Therese is an honest, sincere, pious peasant girl and that she has practised absolutely no deception. With her family physician, Professor Ewald and four sisters, who were skilled nurses, studied her closely for two weeks, and made careful observations at the bedside.

The ecstasy, which was observed and carefully studied, the physicians regarded as hysteria. Her previous history was filled with accounts of typical hysterical attacks. The attacks of blindness, deafness,

and paralysis, which came on suddenly and disappeared just as suddenly, had all the characteristics of hysteria. The story, often told, that a fall from a ladder had broken two spinal vertebræ and caused paralysis, was found to be a fiction. The medical diagnosis during her hospital treatment in 1918 was "hysteria following shock," and in 1920 she received compensation from an insurance company with the diagnosis, "Severe hysteria with blindness and partial paralysis." A study of her case records, including careful examinations, would seem to make this feature of the diagnosis certain.

The ecstasies of the patient then can be explained without great difficulty. Even the employment of Aramaic words, which created a profound impression, seems less remarkable when we learn that she repeats only the words spoken by Christ upon the cross, a few words which she may have learned previously. Professor Ewald, during one of her ecstasies, asked what Christ said, and Therese answered, "Jeruschalēm" and then made some sound that bore no resemblance to either Aramaic or German.

The phenomena of bloody tears and of bloody sweat, both of which she exhibited, have excited the wonder of the Christian world for centuries. In these occurrences men have seen the agony of Christ when He wept, and "His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground." These phenomena are not, however, a strictly Christian heritage. They occurred before the birth of Christ and

later in heathen lands where the name of Christ was not known. Aristotle, who lived three centuries before Christ was born, and Theophrastus, his pupil and successor, both mention bloody sweat in their writings.

In later centuries, historians and physicians describe the same phenomena. Jacques de Thou, the great French historian of the sixteenth century, described the case of an Italian officer who, threatened with public execution, became so agitated that "he sweated blood." A young Florentine who was awaiting execution on the order of Pope Sixtus V, we are told, displayed extreme grief, during which he shed bloody tears and sweat bloody sweat. Among physicians, Hildanus, the father of German surgery, describes the incident of a child who had hemorrhage from the gums, nose and skin; and de Baillou, the great physician of Paris in the sixteenth century, relates, "We observed the bloody sweat in the son of the illustrious Guillaume Budee, so that his clothing was covered with bloody spots. He died from this terrible malady." In 1588, a boy, one Johann Kreutzer, living in Augsburg, had bloody sweats and also bloody spots on his hands, feet, and knees. His case is described and pictured in a contemporary broadside.

Bloody sweat is to-day and has always been a very rare phenomenon, so rare that many people, until recent years, have denied its existence and denounced the accounts as "nursery tales" or "relics of religious



superstition." More recent studies by physicians and scientists have established the existence of bloody sweat beyond the shadow of a doubt, and to-day all text-books on skin diseases describe bloody sweat.

Many of the mysteries of life have been explained by the microscope. We might add that many of the mysteries of death also, since the microscope has taught us that tuberculosis, plague, and syphilis, three of the men of death, are caused by small organisms too minute to be seen by the unaided eye. The microscope explained the miracle of Bolsena and the Bloody Host, and it has contributed more than its share in explaining the miracle of bloody sweat.

The discovery that bacteria could produce a red pigment and that the drops of blood upon the Host were not drops of blood at all but colonies of bacteria, turned the minds of some to consider whether the stories of the miraculous appearance of blood under different conditions could be explained in the same manner. As cases of bloody sweat are extremely rare, accounts in medical literature of this condition are few and far between.

Some forty-odd years ago, Dr. Stott, an English physician, was consulted by a father and his son, both of whom were suffering from the same condition. When they perspired, their underlinen was stained pink, and nearly every morning in summer they noted that the pillow upon which they had





slept was also stained pink. Dr. Stott made some scrapings of the skin, placed them in a culture tube and grew bacteria which produced red pigment.

A few years later Dr. Trommsdorf in Munich saw a lady who was much disturbed because at times she excreted a red sweat. He made similar studies and grew bacteria which formed a deep red pigment.

These examples increased with the years; and physicians, recognizing them as symptoms of an abnormal condition, named it chromidrosis, or colored sweating. Chromidrosis is, however, not really bloody sweat, although often confused with it. Indeed, in chromidrosis, patients may excrete not only red or pink perspiration but also blue, brown, green, or yellow perspiration depending upon the pigment produced, which in turn depends upon the bacteria present.

True bloody sweat does occur, however. Dermatologists, or skin specialists, call it hematidrosis. Dr. Richard Sutton, an international authority on diseases of the skin, states that it "is an extremely rare disorder characterized by excretion of blood through the coil glands, and is usually a manifestation of purpura. The majority of the reported examples have occurred in the newborn and in highly emotional or hysterical subjects."

Some of the cases of bloody sweat have been associated with diseases of the blood, such as purpura, as Dr. Sutton noted. In the disease called purpura, the blood cells do not remain within the blood ves-

sels, but pass through the walls and spread out in the connective tissue. Such patients often show not only spots of blood beneath the skin, but bleed from the mucous membranes of the mouth and nose, sometimes of the eyes and, rarely, from the pores of the skin. Purpura may appear without warning as an independent disease or it may be a complication of some other disease. Medical literature records a number of cases of bloody sweat complicating malarial fever.

Nervous diseases, or nervous shock, has caused a true bloody sweat. Dr. Charles T. Scott described such a case in the *British Medical Journal* for the year 1918. His patient was an intelligent nervous girl who was so frightened by the air raids over England during the World War that she secreted bloody sweat and at times bloody saliva. Dr. Scott examined the sweat under the microscope and found it contained numerous red blood corpuscles. The patient had attacks during the sweats which Dr. Scott called "spasms" and which he noted resembled hysterical attacks.

The bloody sweat of Therese Neumann was examined under the microscope by Dr. Ewald, who found numerous red blood corpuscles present. Therese's bloody sweat is, then, actually a true bloody sweat, the red color being due to blood and not to pigment. The microscopic proof that true bloody sweat can actually exist, incidentally, establishes the veracity of certain ancient chroniclers whose accounts of



bloody sweat were read by a skeptical generation with raised eyebrows.

Dr. Sutton points out that bloody sweat "is usually a manifestation of purpura," a disease which, as we have said, may appear as an independent disease or may complicate some other disease. Purpura may result from benzol poisoning and appears also as a complication of measles, heart disease, arthritis, meningitis, typhus fever, and other infections. It also occurs frequently in hysterical individuals, so that there is an extensive medical literature upon this subject. There are many accounts of hysterical patients who, following some great mental shock or agitation, have developed large areas of purpura. Speaking less technically, in these patients the blood has escaped from the blood vessels, has run out into the tissues and has produced spots that look like large bruises under the skin.

There is an additional feature of purpura which is of great interest. It occurs frequently as the result of a deficient diet. It was one of the most striking symptoms of scurvy, a disease which decimated armies and navies as well as pacific civilians, until the discovery that lemon juice would prevent it. We know now that scurvy is due to a deficiency of vitamin C, and there is increasing evidence that vitamin deficiency is responsible for many cases of purpura.

Some of the saints of old and of recent times have abstained from food for long periods so that their



diet was certainly lacking in necessary vitamins. This, in some people, may have produced a tendency to bleed.

Closely allied with this phenomenon of bloody sweat are the stigmata, the story of which forms such an interesting chapter in the history of religion. The word is derived from the Greek, meaning a mark, and refers to wounds like those of Christ, which have been supernaturally inflicted upon certain of His devout and favored disciples.

The first authentic stigmata were those of St. Francis of Assisi, the "Divine Minstrel." Two years before his death, St. Francis, with Brothers Masseo, Angelo, and Leo, ascended Mt. Alverna, a mountain near Arezzo, which had been given to the order as a retreat. St. Francis, we learn, was "more absorbed than usual in his ardent desire to suffer for Jesus and with him." He fasted for forty days and forty nights, spending most of the time in prayer and in meditation upon the Crucifixion. On September 24, 1224, while in a state of extreme weakness and exhaustion, he had a vision:

In the rays of the rising sun . . . he suddenly perceived a strange figure. A seraph with outspread wings flew toward him from the edge of the horizon and bathed his soul in raptures unutterable. In the center of his vision appeared a cross and the seraph was nailed upon it. When the vision disappeared, he felt sharp sufferings mingling with the ecstasy of the first moments. Stirred to the very depth of his being, he was anxiously seeking

the meaning of it all, when he perceived on his body the "Stigmata of the Crucified One."

During the last two years of his life, St. Francis wore long sleeves to hide the stigmata on his hands and had to abandon his long solitary walks, because walking caused great pain in the stigmata on his feet. Several of his companions saw the stigmata and have left descriptions of them. Pope Alexander IV saw them and was deeply impressed. Some later writers have doubted or denied the story of St. Francis' stigmata. One distinguished neurologist has suggested that St. Francis—faint, famished and half delirious—may have wounded himself, and that the legend of the miraculous appearance of the wounds arose after his death. A somewhat cynical critic has suggested that the wounds came as the result of a fight with some of his disciples and that the story of the stigmata was invented to hide the real truth. Another critic, who has studied the life of St. Francis with great care, asserts that the stigmata are only legend.

There is little reason now to doubt the stigmata of St. Francis. At least one hundred odd instances, possibly more than three hundred, have been recorded since the time of St. Francis. Some skeptics have smiled at Giotto's frescoes showing the stigmata of St. Francis and have attributed them to the artist's imagination. Their skepticism has been shattered by modern science. Actual photographs of modern stigmatized persons have been made which show these

stigmata quite as clearly as do the paintings of the old Masters. The camera has no imagination.

The appearance of the stigmata on the hands and feet of St. Francis and the testimony of the Pope that he had seen them, gave great prestige to the newly formed order of St. Francis. It grew so rapidly in numbers and in influence, that it threatened to overshadow the older order of St. Dominic.

If we are to trust certain old historians, the Dominicans became very jealous of the Franciscans and determined to have a miracle of their own. In 1475, more than two centuries after the death of St. Francis, Catherine Benincase, a Dominican sister, better known as St. Catherine of Siena, while in an ecstasy, perceived the marks of Christ's wounds upon her hands and feet. St. Catherine prayed that they remain invisible, and her prayer was granted insofar as they were always visible to her, but invisible to others.

Catherine's stigmata were widely discussed and also widely doubted—especially by the Franciscans. Quite a controversy arose which was finally terminated by two papal bulls, one from Sixtus IV and one from Innocent VIII. These bulls absolutely forbade belief in the stigmata of St. Catherine and also forbade the representation of stigmata in any picture of St. Catherine. Some artists, however, such as Sano di Pietro, seem to have disobeyed the papal injunctions.



*St. Francis Receives the Stigmata*  
[By Francesco Beccaruzzi]





It would take too long to describe, or even summarize, the 321 cases of stigmatization collected by Dr. Imbert-Gourbeyre, or the 120 cases enumerated by Prof. Macalister. A few instances are not without interest, however, and demonstrate the fact that stigmatization does not always pave the way to canonization as a saint, but may at times be the source of great embarrassment to the Church and the cause of great suffering and unhappiness to the recipient.

Lucia di Narni was born in Umbria, not far from Assisi, and at an early age entered the Dominican cloister at Viterbo. When twenty years of age, in 1496, she fell into an ecstasy while at mass and one of the sisters noted that a wound appeared in the palm of one of her hands. During Holy Week of the same year, stigmata appeared on her hands, on her feet, and over her heart, and "commenced to spurt blood in abundance."

The Bishop of Narni, hearing of this occurrence, visited her, but, suspecting fraud, treated her with great severity. He ordered her wounds washed with warm wine and forbade the sisters' touching her and applying bandages or lotions to the wounds.

Presently the Grand Inquisitor of the Holy Office, assisted by a commission of notables, examined Lucia. They found no evidence of fraud and pronounced it a supernatural occurrence. Pope Alexander VI, hearing of the miracle, sent his own physician to examine the sister. He also reported that there



had been no fraud and that the whole story was authentic. The Pope then sent for Lucia, who went to Rome where she was kindly received, examined, and then sent back to her convent.

The Duke of Ferrara, who was a nephew of the Pope, was greatly impressed by the miracle. He built a magnificent convent near Ferrara, dedicated it to St. Catherine, and installed Lucia de Narni as the abbess. The reputation of the convent and of its saintly abbess grew rapidly.

Lucia bore her stigmata for seven years, after which she prayed to the Lord to make them invisible. Her prayer was answered in part, the stigmata on her hands and feet disappearing, that over her heart remaining.

Presently, Lucia di Narni fell upon evil days. Her champion and protector, the Duke of Ferrara, died. Many of the sisters in the convent were jealous of the fame of their abbess as well as irked by the strictness of her rule. To undermine her authority and prestige, it was necessary to create skepticism regarding her stigmata. Several of the nuns testified that they peeped through the keyhole and saw her making wounds on her body and pouring acid upon them.

These stories and many others were circulated about the unhappy Lucia. The agitation increased and finally, to preserve order, the ecclesiastical authorities intervened, suppressed the privileges of Lucia di Narni, and removed her as abbess. Lucia

bore these humiliations with dignity and humility. After her death, the wound on her side was found open and bathed in blood.

In this same Umbria, where St. Francis and Lucia di Narni lived and received their stigmata, a young woman, who has since been known as St. Veronica Giuliani, was born in 1660. At the age of seventeen she entered a Capuchin convent near Città di Castello where she led a quiet and uneventful life for many years. When she was thirty-three years of age, she prayed that she might receive a crown of thorns like Jesus wore. Her prayer was answered, and a red circle appeared around her head. Two years later, at Christmas, she had a vision, in which she saw the Child Jesus carrying a staff of gold, which had a flaming fire on one end and a sharp spear point on the other. "I felt," she said, "that the Child pierced my heart through and through." When the vision had passed, she perceived a wound over her heart. During Holy Week of the same year, she received stigmata on her hands and feet.

These events came to the ears of the Holy Inquisition, which ordered a strict investigation. The bishop of the diocese, who headed the court of investigation, suspected that Veronica was in the service of the Evil One and treated her with great harshness. Veronica was denounced as a witch, threatened with excommunication and even burning at the stake, was locked in her cell, forbidden to write, and not allowed to attend mass. The other

sisters were ordered to treat her as a heretic and to shun her company.

Veronica accepted these humiliations with resignation, and submitted to all examinations proposed by the investigators. They finally decided that there had been no deceit, no fraud, and no witchcraft, but that the stigmata were authentic. The bishop was now satisfied and left poor Veronica in peace. She prayed that her stigmata be removed and her prayer was granted. They reappeared, however, on several later occasions. After her death in 1727 the figure of the cross was found upon her heart, and a century later she was canonized.

These remarkable experiences of St. Francis in the thirteenth century, of Lucia di Narni in the fifteenth century, and of St. Veronica Giuliani in the seventeenth century, have been duplicated in Italy in the twentieth century. The story of Padre Pio is amazingly similar and of particular interest because he was studied and treated by distinguished contemporary Italian physicians.

Padre Pio, christened Francisco Forgione, was born in Pietrelcina in 1887. He was very devout from childhood and later became a Capuchin monk, taking the name of Father Pius, or Padre Pio.

In 1917, during the World War, he was found by the military authorities to be suffering from pulmonary tuberculosis and was sent to San Giovanni Rotondo, a town in the Alps. Here he carried on his

priestly duties and often experienced ecstasy while saying mass.

In 1918, while celebrating mass, he fell backwards in a faint, and had to be carried from the church. When placed in bed and undressed, he was found to have bleeding wounds on his hands and feet, while over his heart there was a wound "such as is produced by a sharp weapon."

Padre Pio was immediately examined by Dr. Ramonelli, who confirmed the presence of the stigmata. Dr. Merla, who is described as "a former Socialist who never went to church," treated Padre Pio for several years and stated that the wounds were unlike any wounds he had ever seen and were of a preternatural, if not supernatural, nature.

Prof. Bignami of the University of Rome, a man of international reputation, examined Padre Pio and made a brief report. He was most favorably impressed by Padre Pio's sincerity and straightforwardness, and bandaged up his wounds. After several days the bandages were removed, but the wounds had not healed.

The ecclesiastical authorities asked Dr. Giorgio Festa to study Padre Pio and make a report. Dr. Festa studied Padre Pio for several years and, on one occasion, operated upon him for a hernia. After the operation Padre Pio was confined to a hospital where Dr. Festa found that the wounds on Padre Pio's hands and feet and over his heart constantly exuded blood and serum, and various applications had no

healing effect. The wounds secreted about 300 c.c. or a glassful, of fluid daily.

Great crowds of pilgrims came to San Giovanni Rotondo to see the miracle. This was distasteful to the Church authorities, who ordered Padre Pio removed to another monastery. This order enraged the populace of the town, who surrounded the monastery and prevented by force his removal to another locality. They continued to guard him for several years.

In 1923, the Holy Office issued a statement that "they had not confirmed the supernatural nature of the occurrences and that it admonished the faithful to conform themselves to this declaration." This declaration was confirmed in a second communication issued a year later.

The affair of Padre Pio soon became a national issue. Stories of the miracle and articles defending and attacking the priest filled the newspapers. The Capuchin order, which had remained aloof, began to defend their brother with spirit and vigor. Then the Vatican intervened. The Monastery of San Giovanni was withdrawn from the jurisdiction of the Capuchins and placed under the direct orders of the Holy See. The controversy ceased immediately. A pall of silence has fallen over Padre Pio and his stigmata.

One historian remarks that by this action, the Holy See showed great discretion and judgment in the whole affair. "One can imagine," he writes,

“what would happen if this stigmatized priest later conducted himself in a scandalous fashion, or if after a revelation received during ecstasy, he departed from the course of strict Catholic orthodoxy.” This observer evidently feels that miracles and saint-hood should be announced only after the death of the person concerned. Perhaps this is the safest course.

The reality of stigmata can no longer be questioned. Prof. Hase, who doubted the stigmata of St. Francis, was wrong, just as were the malicious sisters who asserted that Lucia di Narni produced her wounds with a penknife and poured acid upon them to keep them fresh. The stigmata of Therese Neumann were examined and described by numerous competent observers including her own physician and a professor for the University of Erlangen. The stigmata of Padre Pio were examined and dressed by the professor of medicine in the University of Rome and by a doctor who, as has been said, was formerly a Socialist and never went inside a church. The competency of such testimony can not be questioned.

Are the stigmata supernatural or natural?

Certainly, they are unusual events, but the Church itself has refused to make belief in them a part of the Christian faith.

Most, if not all, of the stigmatized persons have been hysterical. Also, many of them have had a condition known as dermatographism—a somewhat for-



midable term, which means that after writing or marking on the skin, large welts appear where the marks were made. Such individuals blush easily, often show transient reddish spots on the neck or breast and some, after great nervous excitement, have skin eruptions consisting of blisters, which later burst and discharge serum. These phenomena demonstrate the remarkable influence of the mind over the skin.

The power of suggestion in such individuals is astonishing. Prof. Jendrassik, some fifty years ago, carried out a remarkable set of experiments on such an extremely suggestible patient. This observer told his patient, under hypnosis, that he was touching a red hot iron to her skin. He did nothing of the sort, but stroked her with the edge of a pasteboard box. Soon after awakening, a red area appeared where he had touched her, blisters formed and finally a wound, which took three weeks to heal. This is not a fairy tale but is written by a distinguished neurologist, a director of the Medical Clinic of the University of Budapest for many years, the entire account appearing in the *Neurologisches Centralblatt* in 1888. The young woman in question was a sufferer from hysteria and Jendrassik describes several similar observations which he made upon her. Cases similar to that described by Jendrassik may be found in medical literature.

Pierre Janet, the famous French neurologist, studied over a period of years the case of Madeleine

X, who had numerous ecstasies and later developed stigmata in the characteristic sites—over the hands, feet, and chest. On several occasions she was a patient at the renowned hospital for nervous diseases in Paris, the Salpêtrière, at one time for six years and eight months. Janet noted that skin lesions, blisters and ulcers frequently developed on various parts of her body, but that Madeleine paid no attention to them, only calling his attention to such lesions when they appeared on her hands, feet, or chest. Janet finally made a medical diagnosis of syringomyelia, a disease of the spinal cord causing marked disturbances in sensation and producing blisters and ulcers on the skin.

These recent observations upon bloody sweat, ecstasy, and stigmata tend to place these three phenomena in the realm of natural occurrences. Prof. Ewald, who investigated Therese Neumann with such care and impartiality, apparently shares this point of view. The ecstasy which he observed, he, as a trained psychiatrist, diagnosed as hysteria. The tears really contained blood, as he proved with the microscope, and the stigmata, he found on examination with a hand lens, were very superficial, those on the palm of the hand not connecting with those on the back of the hand. Furthermore, he saw with the hand lens how the blood collected in the stigmata and then dripped from them. These phenomena, he says, are genuine. There is no deceit or attempted fraud, and "in my opinion, the stigmata

are of psychogenic origin." Therese's fast, however, leaves him without any explanation.

According to the statement of Therese, she has been unable to swallow since December 25, 1922, when she prayed St. Theresa to transfer the throat trouble of the young theological student to her, and since that period has taken no solid food. Since December 23, 1936, she states she has taken no food or liquid save for a small sip of water which she receives daily with the Holy Communion.

These remarkable events naturally aroused much comment as well as skepticism. The church authorities wished to send Therese to a hospital where she could be carefully observed and studied, but her parents vigorously opposed this plan. As a compromise, she was confined to her room under the observation of her family physician, Dr. Seidl, and four sisters of charity. The period of observation lasted two weeks and at no time was Therese out of the sisters' sight.

During this period, Therese ate approximately six grains of a piece of communion bread the size of an aspirin tablet and drank eight teaspoonfuls of water. Her weight varied some from day to day, but at the end of the two weeks period of observation, was the same as at the beginning. The sisters were sure that their observations were accurate.

Prof. Ewald, who was called in consultation, went about his investigations with characteristic German thoroughness. The patient was seen every day, her

excreta collected and analyzed, her pulse and temperature recorded regularly.

After extended calculations upon excretion of moisture, temperature changes and metabolic processes, Ewald remarks that if Therese's story is correct and the laws of physics still operate, Therese "should have been long before this, a dried-up mummy." He noted also that Therese, during her ecstasy, lost five and six pounds, but then regained her former weight in a day, and remarks sagely, "This gaining by pounds from nothing can not be explained, since from nothing, comes nothing." He concludes his report by stating that, "Observation of Therese Neumann in a neutral clinic or hospital is absolutely necessary, if science is to have any further interest in this feature of Therese Neumann's stigmatization." This statement probably expresses accurately the medical point of view in the matter.

Fritz Gerlach, editor of the *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten*, published in 1929 a study in two volumes on Therese Neumann. At the end of this study, on page 406 of the second volume, he states that he has come to "the conviction, that the case of Therese Neumann can not be explained by natural agencies (*nicht natürlich erklärbar*)." Ewald is, however, more hopeful and points out that similar cases of living without food have been reported but, when studied and watched with sufficient care, have proved to be false. He notes that the urine of Therese Neumann, at the beginning of the observation, showed sub-

stances present in a patient suffering from starvation, but that later these substances disappeared and the urine became normal. He adds that if Therese submits to such an examination in the clinic, and "these unprecedented statements, which seem at first unbelievable, are confirmed, then science is confronted with an entirely new problem."

It is human nature to deny or scoff at what we can not explain. We see more things than we can understand, but just as scientific study has explained many mysteries of the past, so we may expect an explanation in the future of what seems a mystery to-day.

## Chapter VII

### THE ABBESS OF BINGEN

ONE of the loveliest cities on the Rhine is the old town of Bingen. Nestling at the foot of the ancient Castle Klopp, where the River Nahe flows into the Rhine, it is in the very heart of Rhine history and Rhine legend. A short distance down the river stands, in midstream on a lonely island, the famous Mouse Tower, where, according to legend, Hatto, the wicked Archbishop of Mayence, was eaten by wild mice in 913 A.D. To the south on a high hill, dominating the Rhine and the valley, stands the Chapel of St. Roch, built in honor of the saint who stayed the plague in 1666. Annual pilgrimages are still made to this chapel on St. Roch's day.

Bingen itself far antedates these two events. It was a fortified town under the Romans, who built here a large *castellum*, or citadel, and left behind many architectural remains as well as many objects the excavation and study of which have delighted the archæologist and antiquary. To-day many tourists are attracted to Bingen by the Roman collection in



the town museum, while others who have read the famous poem of the soldier of the legion who lay dying in Algiers wish to see the little town where he "was born in Bingen, fair Bingen on the Rhine."

Across the River Nahe to the north of Bingen lies the town of Bingerbrück, above which rises a small mountain, the Rupertsberg. In the twelfth century on the Rupertsberg there stood a convent, whose abbess was Hildegard, one of the most remarkable women of her age—the friend and adviser of popes, emperors, and kings. The convent has long since disappeared along with the numerous other landmarks familiar to her eyes, but the old Roman bridge across the Nahe still stands just as it did when she walked across it on her way to Bingen.

Hildegard was born in the village of Böckelheim, a few miles south of Bingen. Her father was a nobleman and followed the only profession open to noblemen in that age—the profession of arms. He was a knight and retainer of the Court of Sponheim.

The castle of Sponheim had a very famous guest, while Hildegard was still a child. He was the Emperor Henry IV, the same who on one occasion had done penance before Pope Gregory VII at Canossa but who, deserted by his nobles and his own son, was at this time a prisoner in the dungeons of Sponheim. According to the legend, Hildegard, a girl of five, "a pure face half hidden by long yellow curls, her limpid eyes the pale blue of a periwinkle," vis-

ited the aging emperor in his dungeon, consoled him and spoke to him of heaven.

At the age of eight she entered a cloister on the neighboring Mount St. Disibode and, after seven years as a novitiate, received the veil of a sister from the hands of the Bishop of Bamberg. She was fifteen when she became a Benedictine nun. The religious community constantly grew in numbers and in importance, and after several years, Hildegard, at the age of thirty-six, became the mother superior. In these years her reputation for piety and industry had grown steadily, and soon her name was to extend far beyond her native Rhineland.

Hildegard, from her earliest childhood, was weak and sickly. All her biographers have stressed this point. It was to such as she, they assert, the apostle Paul referred when he said, "God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty." At the age of three, she tells us, she began to have visions—"a strange light which terrified my soul." She spoke to her nurse of these strange lights she saw, but as the nurse saw nothing, she spoke no more of these manifestations.

One day, when only five years of age, while walking with her nurse, she saw a cow. "Look," she said, "what a pretty calf there is within that cow. It is white, it has spots on its face and its feet and is speckled all over its back." A few days later the calf arrived and it conformed perfectly to her description. These remarkable occurrences confirmed her

parents in their belief that she should devote her life to God. They interposed no objection when she entered the convent at eight years of age.

During the years that Hildegard served her novitiate and after she took the veil, she continued to have the visions of light similar to those she experienced in childhood. Seven years after she became superior of the order, she had a vision so overpowering and so compelling that she wrote it down in detail:

In the year one thousand one hundred and forty-one of the Incarnation of Christ, Son of God (I was then forty-two years of age), a shaft of fire, of a sparkling splendor departed from the opened heavens, penetrated my brain and my heart like a flame which heated without burning.

Then a voice pursued her, "Come on," it cried, "and write."

Her intimate friend and scribe, the monk Godfrid, writes:

The poor, little, sickly form of a woman, exhausted by these struggles, made the objections of a confused child who yielded; fear of the judgment of men, the inevitable mockery, her slight understanding of the Latin language. But God had an answer for everything. She heard a voice which said to her, "I, the living and inaccessible light, I illuminate whomsoever I wish, and at my good pleasure, I produce in him wonders far greater than those I performed in my servants of ancient times."

Hildegard lay on her bed, tormented by the dazzling light and utterly worn out by the struggle with the powers of heaven. The good prior of the neighboring monastery, hearing of her torments, ordered her to write what the Lord had revealed to her. She seized her pen, began to write and was immediately healed. She began recording her visions, a collection of which form her great work, *Scivias*, the name a contraction of *Nosce vias Domini* (I know the ways of the Lord).

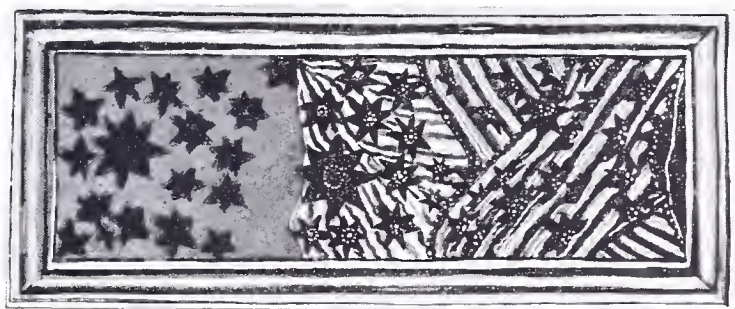
Hildegard wrote her visions herself, but as her knowledge of Latin was fragmentary, they were corrected and transcribed by the monk Godefrid. The first instalment of her visions were submitted to a commission appointed by the bishop. This body read them with great care and reported that "Her visions came from God and were of the same nature as those of the ancient prophets." Thus encouraged, she devoted herself to finishing her *Scivias*, a labor which lasted some ten years, from 1141 to 1151.

In the year 1147, St. Barnard, who was at Bingen preaching a crusade, heard of Hildegard's visions. He visited the abbess and was convinced that her visions were of divine origin. He advocated her cause before Pope Eugenius III, who pronounced her visions genuine, and ordered them read before himself and the cardinals who were assembled at Treves for a synod. Hildegard wrote the Pope that she had seen in a vision that he would not return to Rome until near the end of his pontificate. This prediction, made

in 1147, was fulfilled. The good Pope did not return to Rome until five years later and died seven months after his return.

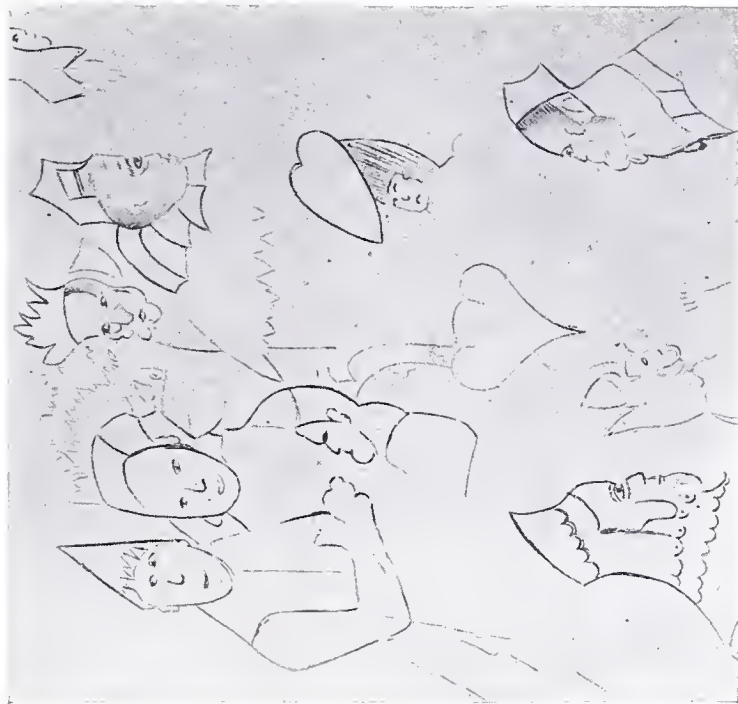
The same year, Hildegard, "at the command of the Holy Spirit" decided to leave Mount St. Disibode and establish a convent on the Rupertsberg at Bingen. This proposed change in location was strenuously opposed by the monks of St. Disibode. Hildegard became ill, was confined to her bed and suffered mental and bodily torments. She had several visions in which the Lord told her it was His will that she go to the Rupertsberg. When permission was finally granted, the prostrate and suffering Hildegard "to the surprise of all, rose up, healed. It was a miracle."

Hildegard was forty-nine years of age when she became abbess on the Rupertsberg. She lived there for thirty-two years, dying at the advanced age of eighty-one. Her fame and reputation spread rapidly throughout Christendom. Her saintly life and her miraculous visions raised her to a position of eminence in the Church comparable to that attained two centuries later by St. Catherine of Siena. Indeed, there is a great similarity between the two women. Both had moments of ecstasy, both saw visions, and both had a great abundance of sound common sense and of political acumen. In her literary attainments, however, Hildegard far surpassed St. Catherine. Her *Scivias* with its wealth of imagery, its fearsome descriptions, and its terrible prophecies is unique in the annals of mysticism.



*Hildegard's Vision of  
the Falling Stars*

[From Charles E. Singer, *From  
Magic to Science*, Boni &  
Liveright, 1928]



*Hallucinations of Sight*

[From a sketch by a patient of Dr. Marchand]





Hildegard, as abbess of Rupertsberg, led a life of great activity. She carried on a voluminous and unusually frank correspondence with the Popes Eugenius III, Anastasius IV, Adrian IV, and Alexander III, and with the Emperors Conrad III and Frederick Barbarossa. She also traveled extensively in the Rhineland, visiting and encouraging the faithful in Cologne, Treves, Bamberg, Würzburg, and, according to some, as far as Tours and Paris. She continued to have her visions, and after completing her *Scivias*, wrote two other remarkable books, a mystery play and several historical works, and made an extensive collection of musical compositions. A medical work is also attributed to her, but certain critics doubt its authenticity.

Hildegard's *Scivias*, the composition of which extended, as we have said, through ten years, is an extraordinary work, quite as extraordinary as another work which it strongly resembles—the *Apocalypse of St. John the Divine*. It consists of thirty visions upon the most varied subjects—God and nature, the angels and paradise lost, hell, the fall of man, the prophets, the soul, the Old and New Testaments, the Eucharist and the Church. A brief extract from one of her visions gives a good idea of their terrifying nature and also of the remarkable imagery of Hildegard's descriptions:

In a dazzling light, I see a multitude of people clothed in white; a veil transparent as crystal covers them. A path stretches out before them and on this path crawls

an immense reptile, hideous, and raging with fury. At the left of the monster like at a fair, there were heaped up all the riches and delicacies of the century. Some men passed rapidly without buying, others walked about buying and selling.

The black reptile bristled up, covered with pustules and ulcers. Five circular spots marked his body; one green, one red, one white, one yellow and one black; all were filled with deadly venom. His head was partly crushed. His eyes protruded bloody and inflamed; his ears were long and hairy; his nostrils and mouth were like those of a viper; his hands like those of a man, his tail short and horrible. On his body there was a chain which bound his hands and extremities, and this chain, fastened at the bottom of the abyss, fastened him so tightly that he could not move as his malice wished.

From his mouth there issued gusts of flames, which dividing, went either toward the heavens, toward the spiritual men or toward the chasm.

The flames which he hurled upward attacked the men who wished to climb to heaven: the first were in the clouds, the second on the path between heaven and earth, the third near to earth; all crying, "Let us go to Heaven." Now some, touched by the flame, fell; others could scarcely support themselves; others, fallen, rose up and climbed toward heaven. . . .

Then a voice from heaven was heard again and said to me, "God dispensing all things with justice and equity, calls the faithful to the glory of heaven, but the old deceiver, hiding in ambush, tries to lead them astray, and employs against them all the artifices of his malice."

Some of her visions have been described as prophetic. Later church historians state that in her visions she predicted the advent of the Reformation,

the religious wars of the Continent, the French Revolution and other political and religious cataclysms. The brief extract above, from one of her visions, indicates, however, how much easier it is to read meanings into her words than to extract knowledge from them.

In Hildegard's later work, her *Liber Divinorum Operum* (Book of Divine Works), the abbess of Bingen describes the structure of the world, of the heavens and of man, the old philosophical problem of the microcosm, and the macrocosm of man and the universe. This knowledge Hildegard gained, she says, from visions, and the book was composed in the same fashion as her *Scivias*. However, Prof. Singer, a modern scholar, who has devoted much time to a study of Hildegard, says that her Book of Divine Works is borrowed largely from the work of a contemporary, Bernard Sylvester of Tours.

According to Hildegard, the earth, which is spherical, lies in the center of the universe, surrounded by the planets and then by circles, first of water, then of air, and lastly of fire. This description which first appears in her *Scivias* and is elaborated in later works, while not in consonance with modern astronomical teaching, is at least noteworthy for the fact that Hildegard describes the earth as spherical while most of her contemporaries believed it to be flat.

The visions of Hildegard during her life were

accepted as the voice of God speaking through His servant. St. Bernard wrote her:

Be blessed with this divine favor, for which we congratulate you, recalling to you that God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Preserve tenderly this grace which is in you: that which the Holy Spirit presses you to announce, announce it with prudence, remembering these words: open thy mouth and I will fill it.

With the centuries, however, the visions seem to have lost some of the glamor or force with which they impressed her contemporaries. Some five hundred years after her death Pope Benedict XIV, asked to pass upon the authenticity of her visions, decided that

although many of these revelations, recalling the revelations of St. Catherine of Siena and of Saint Bridget have been approved, we cannot and ought not give them the assent of the Catholic faith, but simply the assent of human faith, according to the rules of prudence.

Visions, according to certain ecclesiastical authorities, came from God, from the Devil or as the result of some pathological condition. Since the Pope himself has cast doubt upon the divine origin of Hildegard's visions and it is highly improbable that the Devil ever came within miles of the pious abbess, we might perhaps seek in some pathological state or disease, the cause of her visions.

The causes of visions are much better known today than in Hildegard's time. Visions, pseudopia,

false vision, or seeing things that do not exist—or at least have no material existence—may be due to a variety of causes. Various drugs, such as alcohol, opium, and *Cannabis indica*, produce at times the strangest of visions. Alcohol in the Christian world accounts for more cases of pseudopia than all other causes combined, while in the Mohammedan world where alcohol is taboo, *Cannabis indica*, or hashish, has provided the faithful with many rapturous visions of Paradise and of a heavenly harem. All drugs can be excluded in the case of Hildegard.

Epileptics, at the moment of their seizure, usually have what is called aura, a visual hallucination, or vision, if you will. The aura, which consists of a blinding light, or sparkles of light, often forms bizarre patterns or structures before it is blotted out by the unconsciousness which accompanies the attack. Some epileptics, however, have visual hallucinations for hours or even days before an epileptic attack, a type of prolonged aura. Dr. Marchand saw in one of the Paris hospitals such a patient who had such vivid hallucinations before her eyes, that on several occasions she projected them upon a sheet of white paper and traced them with a pencil. It is possible that Hildegard's visions had a similar origin, but it is improbable. Had epilepsy caused Hildegard's visions, the repeated attacks would surely have produced mental deterioration, whereas Hildegard's mind was clear at eighty.

In spite of the advanced age to which Hildegard



lived, she was, as we have said, from earliest childhood sickly and ailing. She was frequently confined to her bed, paralyzed, or blind, or bereft of voice, especially during her visions, and then suddenly rose up, moved with agility, saw clearly and spoke fluently, and began writing down her visions. On numerous occasions she suddenly became so ill her friends despaired of her life, and then, just as suddenly, she recovered. Her contemporaries described her attacks as divine visitations and her recoveries as miracles. Medical science to-day has one word for these phenomena—hysteria.

Hildegard suffered from hysteria in her childhood, in her middle age and in her old age. This is no mark of shame. Many great and good people have suffered from hysteria. St. Catherine of Siena was one of the great hysterics of history and withal, an admirable character as well as a great woman.

It is noteworthy that Hildegard's visions were usually, if not always, accompanied by great physical suffering, and also that they invariably began with certain flashes of light. This type of visual experience is well known to sufferers from migraine, or sick headache. Fortunately, a manuscript of Hildegard's *Scivias* is preserved in the library at Wiesbaden. This manuscript has beautiful illustrations which may have been executed under Hildegard's own eyes. Many of these illustrations bear a striking resemblance to the "aura" or visual phenomena, which precede an attack of migraine.

Prof. Charles Singer, who has pointed out the probable rôle played by migraine in the causation of Hildegard's visions, cites the following passage, which Hildegard interpreted as a vision of the Fall of the Angels, but which, he says, every sufferer from migraine will recognize as "scintillating scotoma":

I saw a great star, most splendid and beautiful, and with it an exceeding multitude of falling sparks which with the star followed southward. And they examined Him upon His throne as something hostile, and turning from Him they sought rather the north. And suddenly they were all annihilated, being turned into black coals . . . and cast into the abyss that I could see them no more.\*

Hildegard died in 1179 in her eighty-second year. She was never officially canonized, but her name was entered in the Roman martyrology and her feast set on September 17th, the anniversary of her death. She is, therefore, usually referred to as St. Hildegard.

\* Charles E. Singer, *From Magic to Science* (Boni & Liveright, 1928). Quoted by permission of Liveright Publishing Company.

## *Chapter VIII*

### SAGE AND SEER

SOME five centuries after the death of St. Hildegard there was born in Sweden in 1688, a man whose career is as baffling and perplexing to modern historians as it was to his contemporaries. This man was Emanuel Swedenborg, born Emanuel Swedberg.

The great majority of historical personages who have been blessed with visions were sons and daughters of the Roman Catholic Church. Swedberg, by contrast, was a devout Lutheran, the son of the pious and learned Lutheran Bishop of Skara, in the kingdom of Sweden.

Swedberg, a brilliant student, graduated from the University of Upsala and then visited England, Holland, France, and Germany. Here he studied natural science, but spent his hours of relaxation in writing Latin verses. After five years of foreign study, he returned to Upsala, where he continued the study of natural science and took up engineering, publishing a scientific periodical, in which he described mechanical and mathematical discoveries and inven-

tions. His great talents and abilities being recognized, he was soon appointed assessor to the Swedish Board of Mines by King Charles XII, that extraordinary personage whom posterity has called the "Madman of the North," the greatest military genius Sweden ever produced and their last great warrior.

His reports on smelting and assaying of metals mark an epoch in the history of metallurgy. In the war with Norway, Swedberg was of great assistance to his royal master in designing and constructing a machine which carried the fleet overland from Stromstadt to Iddefjord, a distance of fourteen miles. After the death of Charles, who was killed at the siege of Fredriksten, Swedberg was raised to the rank of nobility and his name changed to Swedenborg. Henceforth, he was known as Emanuel Swedenborg.

Swedenborg now began a life of unparalleled activity. He soon became a powerful figure in the House of Nobles, where he became an authority on the decimal system, currency, balance of trade and the liquor traffic. He conceived the idea of and was responsible for the establishment of the famous Gothenburg licensing system, whose basic principle was the elimination of private profit in the liquor traffic. This Gothenburg system is to-day the model and the envy of less fortunate nations.

In addition to his public duties in the House of Nobles and to his activities in the mining industry, which necessitated prolonged visits and researches in the mines of Sweden, Saxony, Bohemia, and Austria,

he carried on investigations in physics and mathematics. Elected professor of mathematics at Upsala, he declined the chair with the remark that the science of mathematics was too limited by its theories.

At the age of forty, Swedenborg began to lay the foundation for his life work—a scientific explanation of the universe. This ambitious project involved a tremendous amount of reading and research in mathematics, astronomy, physics, geology, chemistry, paleontology, physiology, philosophy—in short, the sum of human knowledge.

The results of his studies were published in a series of books, from 1734 to 1745. The discoveries recorded in these works amaze modern students even more than they did his contemporaries, probably because they contain mention of so many discoveries that this age regards as modern. The range of his knowledge was incredible. He formulated the nebular hypothesis, the “modern” view of the formation of planets, and devised a method of determining longitude at sea by astronomical calculations. His theory of light and of cosmic atoms is essentially that taught to-day, and his investigations in paleontology alone would have assured him a lasting niche in science’s hall of fame.

He described methods of refining ore, which are still employed to-day. In physiology, he localized muscular movements in certain portions of the brain and described accurately the functions of the spinal cord. He identified chemicals by the shape of their

crystals and gave a correct account of the modern molecular magnetic theory. In addition to these things, he studied aviation, designed a flying machine, and experimented with machine-guns.

The above-mentioned discoveries are but a few of those described in his works. A complete list would almost fill a volume. We are amazed, almost aghast, at the stupendous versatility of the man. No field of knowledge was left untouched and, in each of them, he brought to the surface nuggets of pure gold. He seems, indeed, an eighteenth-century Aristotle. If his fellow countryman, Nobel, had been alive at that time, Swedenborg would have been worthy not of one Nobel prize, but of a dozen. It seems incredible that one human mind could have encompassed so much knowledge, that one brain could contain so much learning.

At the age of fifty-eight, Swedenborg was, undoubtedly, the most famous man in his country—a scholar, scientist, administrator, and statesman. At an age when many men retire from active affairs, Swedenborg could have followed their example, certain that his achievements sufficed for any one man's lifetime. He might have done so, except for a remarkable incident which occurred in the fifty-eighth year of his life.

One evening in London, Swedenborg dined late and ate heavily:

Toward the end of the meal [he relates], I remarked that a kind of mist spread before my eyes, and I saw the



floor of my room covered with hideous reptiles, such as serpents, toads, and the like. I was astonished, having all my wits about me, and being perfectly conscious. The darkness now attained its height and then passed away. I now saw a man sitting in a corner of the chamber. As I had thought myself entirely alone, I was greatly frightened when he said to me, "Eat not so much!" My sight again became dim, but when I recovered it I found myself alone in my room. . . .

I went home, but the following night the same man appeared to me again. I was, this time, not at all alarmed. The man said: "I am God, the Lord, the Creator and Redeemer of the world. I have chosen thee to unfold to men the spiritual sense of the Holy Scripture. I will myself dictate to thee what thou shalt write." The same night the world of spirits, hell and heaven, were convincingly opened up to me, where I found many persons of my acquaintance of all conditions.

St. Hildegard, St. Catherine, St. Joan of Arc, St. Bernadette, all had visions while children. Swedenborg's first vision was at the age of fifty-eight. Swedenborg returned home and "called to a holy office by the Lord Himself," resigned all of his positions, withdrew to his study and spent his remaining years in solitude, listening to the Lord and writing at His dictation. He continued, according to his own statements, on terms of intimacy with the Creator for twenty-five years.

When Swedenborg resigned as assessor to the bureau of mines, he wrote that his sole reason was to "be more at liberty to devote myself to that new function to which the Lord had called me." Some

of his friends thought that possibly, like so many religious reformers or enthusiasts, he would begin preaching and take active steps toward the formation of a new church. He did neither. He merely retired to his study and began writing.

Two years after he had begun to converse with the Lord, the first volume of his *Arcana Cœlestia* appeared. The last volume of this work appeared seven years later. This work was followed by many others until, at the time of his death, his printed works comprised some fifty stout volumes and, in addition, a mass of unedited manuscript. A reader who had never heard of Swedenborg, or of his history, would probably regard these works as the creation of some highly imaginative writer, who, unable to write in verse was trying, in prose, to outdo Dante's *Divine Comedy*. He would probably be surprised to learn that this work was written by a man of honor and integrity, blameless in his life and morals, one of the luminaries of science in his age, who states on his honor that every word is true, that everything described he saw with his own eyes.

In this extraordinary work Swedenborg describes his various visits to heaven, hell, and the world of spirits and what he saw there. Heaven he found consisted of various societies of angels. The intelligent angels wear garments that gleam like fire, the less intelligent are clothed in white. The angels live in houses with chambers, parlors, bedrooms, gardens, and lawns. Swedenborg describes their houses in

great detail and says, "whenever I have talked with angels face to face, I have been with them in their abodes."

Swedenborg found divine worship in heaven to be much as it is on earth:

In the heavens, as on the earth, there are doctrines, preachings, and church edifices. That I might learn about their meetings in places of worship, I have been permitted at times to attend and to hear the preaching. The preacher stands in a pulpit at the east. . . . There is a circular arrangement of seats, so that all are in the preacher's view. . . . All preachers are appointed by the Lord and have therefrom a gift for preaching. None others are permitted to preach in the churches. They are not called priests, but ministers.

Angels in heaven and all the people in heaven speak the same language, the angelic language. "Angels are unable to utter a single word of human language." The angelic language, Swedenborg found, has certain points of similarity with Hebrew.

Swedenborg discovered that marriages were solemnized in heaven, but that polygamy was not permitted. He attended a marriage service in heaven and describes it in great detail.

The fate of the heathen in the other world is a problem that has troubled theologians and churchmen for centuries. Swedenborg found that many heathen who had lived good lives were in heaven. Among such pagans, he found Cicero, with whom he discussed theology and philosophy at great length.

He found some Jews in heaven who lived in towns of their own apart from the rest "where the streets appear filled with filth and impurities," and carried on a trade in precious stones and toys at a heavenly street fair. Some of them, he says, "make precious stones artificially so they can scarcely be distinguished from the genuine. But these, when they are found out, are severely punished; they are put into a prison where they suffer harsh things, and are cast into the hells." He heard a Chinese choir singing one day and after they had finished singing, he began to speak to them of Christ. He noted the name was repugnant to them and, on inquiry, found it came from the fact that they had learned in China, before death, "that Christians lived worse lives than they did, and were destitute of charity." Swedenborg found that "among the heathen in heaven, the Africans are the most beloved."

In addition to the descriptions of the social, intellectual and moral aspects of heaven, Swedenborg relates many interesting personal experiences. He was a guest of Pope Benedict XIV, had a pleasant visit with St. Xavier, discussed theology with Luther and Melanchthon, and saw Pythagoras, Aristotle, Socrates, Augustus, Cæsar, Xenophon, Calvin, Pope Sixtus and Louis XIV.

Swedenborg found that hell, contrary to popular belief, was not ruled by the Devil, but by the Lord Himself. The Lord does not cast people into hell, they "cast themselves into hell by their own free

choice." Swedenborg found there was really such a thing as hell fire, and adds, "The Lord permits torments in the hells because in no other way can evils be restrained and subdued." The subject of hell is not very congenial to the gentle philosopher, he leaves it with no apparent regret, and devotes much less space to it in his work than to heaven.

One day, while Swedenborg was in his study, a young man attracted by his fame, called upon him. This young man, Gabriel Henry Porthan, who later became one of the most celebrated scholars in Sweden, had just graduated from the university and wished to talk with the famous man. Swedenborg's domestic informed the caller that her master sent word he had another caller, but would see him presently.

The young man, while waiting, could not ignore the fact that a lively conversation was taking place in Swedenborg's study, and that it was conducted in the Latin language. Understanding that tongue, the young scholar heard a discussion on the antiquities of Rome, but was somewhat puzzled when he observed that there was only one voice speaking and that his sentences were followed by extremely long pauses. Presently, Swedenborg appeared and, walking to the door and bowing respectfully, said in Latin he hoped his guest would repeat the visit and, opening the door, bowed his invisible guest out.

The young scholar, Porthan, saw no one, but Swedenborg turned to him, saying: "Excuse me, Sir, for making you wait! I had, as you observed, a vis-

itor. And can you guess whom? Only think, my dear Sir, Virgil. And do you know: he is a fine and pleasant fellow. I have always had a good opinion of the man, and he deserves it. He is as modest as he is witty, and he deserves entertaining.”

Young Porthan wrote later that he had a delightful visit with Swedenborg and had for him much admiration, “mingled with regret that on a certain point, a screw in the venerable man was loose or altogether fallen away.”

Swedenborg's writings presently aroused the Swedish clergy. Many of the clergymen were upset at the revelations, or visions, which he published from time to time and were also disturbed by the fact that he did not partake of the Holy Communion. Two bishops, relatives of his, made a friendly remonstrance to him. He answered that such observances were not necessary for one who associated with angels.

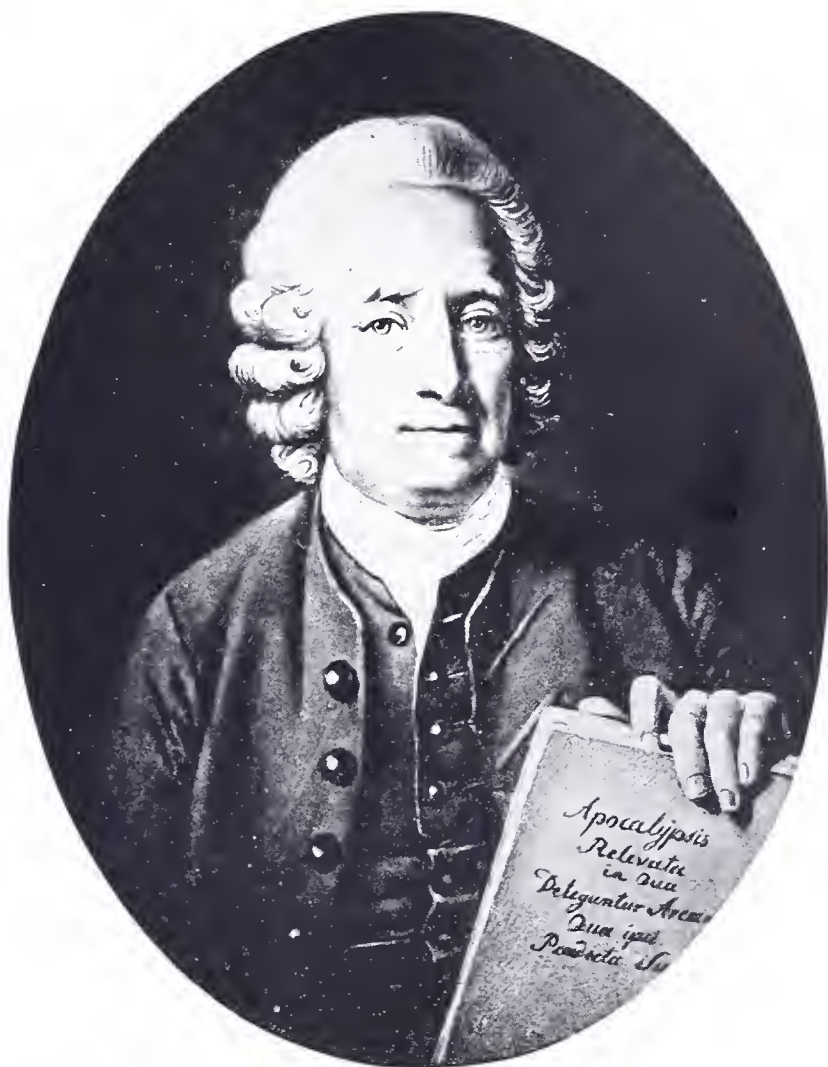
Swedenborg spent many of his later years in London. On Christmas Eve, 1771, he suffered from a stroke of apoplexy which deprived him of his speech for three weeks and left a paralysis of one arm. He now spent most of his time in bed, where he was visited by his friend the Rev. Arvid Ferelius, a Lutheran clergyman in London. Rev. Ferelius asked him if he wished to partake of Holy Communion. Swedenborg replied it was not necessary since he was a member of the church in the other world, but that he would gladly do so “in order to show the con-



nexion and union between the church in heaven and the church on earth." He died on March 29, 1772, at the age of eighty-four, twenty-seven years after his first conversation with the unknown stranger, who was the Lord.

Swedenborg never attempted during his lifetime to found a church. His doctrines, which were the revelations he had received, would, he felt sure, gradually work their way into all churches. He wished to engraft them upon the teachings of all Christian churches without causing the strife that had occurred between the Jewish Church and the Christian Church. Many of his earlier converts were filled with the same thought and became Swedenborgians without giving up their old church affiliations. Some fifteen years after his death, however, the first Swedenborgian Church, or the Church of the New Jerusalem, was formed in London. Branches of this church were later formed in Sweden, Norway, Denmark, America, and Australia. His adherents in England to-day number some 6,300 members.

In 1861, a court decision in Vienna against the followers of Swedenborg stimulated several Viennese psychiatrists to study the whole movement as a psychological phenomenon and not as a religious or moral problem. After studying Swedenborg's life and writings, they decided without reservation that he was suffering from a psychosis or, to employ lay language, that he was insane. One clinching argument was a quotation from Swedenborg himself:



*The Bettmann Archive*

*Emanuel Swedenborg*  
[After the portrait by Kraft]



People who think much about spiritual things, so that they find these things in themselves, begin also to hear spirits, who speak with them, for all spiritual things, if a man follows them, and not other considerations which belong to this world and are changeable, press deep into the spirit, occupy the entire spirit of man and transport him into the spirit world. People of this kind are visionaries and enthusiasts.

These psychiatrists felt the whole movement was formed of "visionaries" whose contagious zeal was likely to spread, as did the contagion of the Dancing Mania and of the Children's Crusade. Swedenborg's visions, they concluded, his trips to the other world, and his conversations with notable persons were nothing but hallucinations of vision and hearing.

Hallucinations have been the subject of intensive investigation for a generation, and particularly during the last decade. The word, which is derived from a Greek word meaning "to wander" or "to wander in the mind," has been difficult to define and to differentiate from an illusion. It is usually defined as a false sense perception for which the cause is not obvious. A person who looks at a tree and thinks it is a ghost has an illusion but one who looks out into blank space and sees a ghost has an hallucination. The causes and types of hallucinations have been studied with great care, and a fairly clear understanding of these phenomena has been worked out. It will be of interest to see whether Swedenborg's visions fit into any of the accepted categories.

Hallucinations, as symptoms of physical and mental disease, are well known. The alcoholic individual who, in an attack of delirium tremens, sees snakes, frogs, and beetles crawling over the floor, is a familiar example. Although Swedenborg, on that memorable night when he first saw the Lord, saw "hideous reptiles, such as serpents, toads, and the like" crawling over the floor, we can immediately clear Swedenborg of any suspicion of delirium tremens or of chronic alcoholism. He was exceedingly temperate all his life.

Brain tumors sometimes signal their approach by causing hallucinations in their victims. This again is excluded, since it is hardly likely that a man with a brain tumor would live for twenty-seven years, or that it would not increase in size during those years and produce additional symptoms.

Hallucinations are frequently the earliest symptoms of severe mental disease. A high percentage of the patients in our institutions for the insane have first aroused the suspicion of their friends and relatives by hearing voices and seeing things no one else could see. We can certainly acquit Swedenborg of any major mental disease. His hallucinations never increased in frequency or intensity; they always had a certain logical sequence; he developed no further symptoms and his disease did not progress. Also, to his friends, his mental faculties were not impaired.

Hallucinations sometimes accompany diseases of the heart, lungs, stomach, and other organs or vis-

cera. These "visceral" hallucinations have been studied intensively the past thirty years. Swedenborg on that first night when he saw the heavenly visitor probably had some digestive discomfort and was warned, "Eat not so much." There is, however, no further evidence of any stomach trouble, or intemperate eating. For years, Swedenborg suffered from a stone, but here again any relationship between the stone and his visions must be discarded.

Epileptics, just before a seizure, often have hallucinations of both sight and hearing. Swedenborg was not an epileptic. Migraine or sick headache also spared him.

One very good account of Swedenborg's heavenly visions has been preserved and is of especial value in attempting a diagnosis. This occurrence was related by Mr. Springer, the Swedish consul at London, who accompanied Swedenborg one evening to a hotel in London. Swedenborg went to bed and presently Springer and the innkeeper who were in an adjoining room, heard a "remarkable noise," and could not imagine its cause. They peeped through a little window in the door and saw Swedenborg lying in bed, talking, his hands raised toward heaven and his body trembling all over. He spoke for half an hour, but they could not understand what he was saying until he suddenly let his hand fall down and cried out "My God!"

The two men went into his room and asked him if he was ill. He answered, "No, but I have had a



long discourse with some of my heavenly friends and I am in a great perspiration." He got up, changed his nightshirt, and went to bed again and slept all night.

Swedenborg's biographer, James Wilkinson, states that this occurrence portrays "his physical state during one of his trances. His natural voice, it seems, was stirred during a spiritual conversation. This occasionally occurs in sleep, where a lively dream will call forth sounds and movements from the sleeper. The trembling of the body is noteworthy, and is often witnessed in the first phases of ecstasy and catalepsy."

Wilkinson's suspicion that Swedenborg's visions could be classed as ecstasy, or catalepsy, gives us the clue to the probable diagnosis. This was not the suggestion of a hostile critic, but of a biographer, who states his own conviction that "Swedenborg's prepared mind, guided by the Lord, has given us imperishable doctrines of heaven and hell, founded upon real experience."

Swedenborg, then, was probably a sufferer, or shall we say the lucky subject of ecstasy, catalepsy, or, to employ a later term, of self-hypnosis. His experiences were a mystery to his contemporaries, for he died four years before Mesmer discovered mesmerism, some ten years before the Marquis de Puységur discovered somnambulism, and nearly seventy years before a Manchester surgeon, James Braid, coined the term hypnotism.

A man of spotless life and character, Emanuel Swedenborg, had he lived a few centuries earlier would certainly have figured in ecclesiastical history as a holy man and a prophet, possibly even as a saint, although he never attempted to heal the sick or cast out devils.

## Chapter IX

### THE HEALING TOUCH

THE ceremony of laying on hands for scrofula, or touching for the King's Evil, was a royal prerogative for centuries. In England, the practice of healing scrofula by the Royal Touch began with Edward the Confessor and lasted for seven centuries. The last King of England to exercise this prerogative was the blunt old Dutchman, King William, who somewhat spoiled the ceremony by saying after he had touched the patient, "God give you better health and more sense."

In the reign of Charles II, the practice, which had lapsed during the protectorate of Oliver Cromwell, was revived with great enthusiasm and, apparently, with great success. Richard Wiseman, the greatest surgeon of his day, writes with due humility that the King "cureth more in any one year, than all the Chirurgeons of *London* have done in an age." The King, however, had a great rival in a mere commoner, one Valentine Greatrakes, whose cures were all the more remarkable since he was not the Lord's

Anointed. Indeed, many asserted that he had cured cases where the King had failed.

Valentine Greatrakes was born in Ireland and was a student at Trinity College, Dublin, when the Irish Rebellion of 1641 forced him to flee to England. He later enlisted in Cromwell's army and after Old Ironsides conquered Ireland, became a justice of the peace in Cork. With the Restoration of Charles II, Greatrakes, like so many who had served under Cromwell, lost his appointment and retired to a life of contemplation, meditating upon the vanities and wickedness of the world.

One day Greatrakes suddenly became conscious that he possessed the gift of healing. Greatrakes relates that he told his wife, "that I did verily believe, that God had given me the blessing of curing the Kings-evil; for whether I were in private or in publick, sleeping or walking, still I had the same impulse." His good wife laughed at him and bade him try his skill upon a small boy who had the King's Evil "very grievously in the eyes, Cheek, and Throat." Greatrakes laid hands upon him, prayed, and two days later "the eye was almost quite whole," and the node in his neck had suppurated and, within a month, "was perfectly healed, and so continues, God be praised."

Soon afterwards, a woman, who had had the evil for seven years, came to Greatrakes seeking assistance. The poor woman had such a dreadful appearance "that she would have affrighted and poysoned any

one almost that saw or came near her," so Greatrakes asked a physician to treat her. "His reply was that she was eaten out with the evil, and that all the men in Ireland could do her no good." Greatrakes then told the doctor he could cure her, but the skeptical physician answered that if he could cure her, he could cure all diseases. Greatrakes then touched her, and six weeks afterwards she returned to his house perfectly well and continued so. Greatrakes adds that many people with the evil "came to me from several counties and I stroked them . . . and delivered them."

The remark of the doctor that if Greatrakes could cure the woman, he could cure all diseases, evidently lodged in Greatrakes' mind. The ague was epidemic in that part of Ireland. Greatrakes now had an impulse that he could cure that disease also. He stroked a neighbor's wife for the ague, and "she went away perfectly cured."

Greatrakes now had as a patient a man of great influence and prominence, Colonel Phaire in the County of Cork. Colonel Phaire was suffering from the ague, but as soon as Greatrakes stroked him, "his Fit left him so that he had it no more." The fame of this cure spread abroad, so that soon there was a crowd of people at Colonel Phaire's beseeching Greatrakes to stroke them and heal their various diseases. Thus far, Greatrakes had stroked only for the King's Evil and for the ague. Yielding to their entreaties, he found to his amazement that he could also cure epilepsy, pains, aches, and fevers, so that

the people "went well home rejoicing and praising God."

Great numbers of people now came to Greatrakes for treatment. He set aside three days a week for treating the sick and stroked from early dawn until into the night. His operations attracted the attention of the Bishop of Lismore, who reproved him for practising without a license, but the good bishop could only reprove since Greatrakes was obviously not practising medicine.

Greatrakes' reputation spread far and wide. Presently, he enjoyed one of the certain attributes of fame—pamphlets written about him. Across the sea, Henry Stubbs, a physician in Stratford-on-Avon, wrote a pamphlet called *The Miraculous Conformist* which described the marvelous cures and attempted to explain them. According to Dr. Stubbs, the body of Greatrakes was composed of peculiar ferments, the effluvia of which he introduced into the bodies of his patients by stroking them. These effluvia "restore the temperament of the debilitated parts, regenerate the blood and dissipate" the disease, driving it out through the eyes, nose, mouth, and feet.

Greatrakes' own explanation was much simpler. When heckled by doubters and queried by the curious, he says, "My reply was a smile, which was the best I could use in answering such fond enquiries."

Greatrakes was invited by Henry More, the great English philosopher, to come to England to cure Lady Conway of her headaches. In this he failed,



but he stroked many other persons on her estate in Warwickshire and healed them of divers diseases.

The fame of Greatrakes continued to grow in England, and there was an insistent clamor that he go to London. He finally yielded after being invited to come by Lord Arlington, Secretary of State, and lived for some time at Lincoln's Inn Fields. Here "Greatrakes the Stroker" healed the sick, the halt, and the lame. Certain persons, who were skeptical of his claims, attacked him in print. In answer to these critics, Greatrakes wrote his autobiography describing his successes and listing fifty-three testimonials from such eminent persons as Andrew Maxwell the poet, Ralph Cudworth the philosopher, the Bishop of Chester, and Robert Boyle F.R.S., the eminent chemist.

King Charles II, eager for some new diversion, invited his rival Greatrakes to stroke for him at Whitehall. One might suspect that Charles, who was a great dispenser of the Royal Touch, would have been envious and vindictive toward an upstart commoner, who had encroached upon the royal prerogatives. However, Charles, even when judged by his enemies, was never vindictive. His creed and philosophy of life were clearly expressed in his own statement that "I am no atheist but I could not think God would make a man miserable only for taking a little pleasure out of the way."

Greatrakes stroked at Whitehall before King Charles and his courtiers, but failed utterly. None

of the pains disappeared, none of the chills ceased, none of the lame walked. Possibly he was too much awed in the presence of his royal rival to speak with his old voice of authority, or perhaps, the King had sent in a group of hand-picked incurable patients. This spectacular failure had a very depressing effect upon Greatrakes. The impulse and power to heal had apparently departed almost as suddenly as it came. Soon afterwards, Greatrakes returned to Ireland, where he lived in obscurity in the country until his death at the age of fifty-five.

Greatrakes' career was truly meteoric; he both rose and fell like a meteor. That he was sincere in his belief he could cure disease by stroking, is certain. It has also been clearly proved, that he took no money for his cures. His explanation of his cures was always simply that "God gave my hand this Gift."

In Greatrakes' conceptions of disease, the Devil plays an important rôle. He writes of "dumb Devils, deaf Devils and talking Devils," but in every instance the stroke tamed the devil or drove him out.

The belief that the Devil was active in human affairs lingered long in Europe. The Devil, after being active for seventeen centuries and more, could not be unceremoniously dumped overboard and the people told that he no longer molested them. The history of the past was clearly against this idea. In England, the Devil and his colleagues, the witches, had tried to drown King James: in Germany the

Devil had tried to prevent Dr. Martin Luther from translating the Bible until the good doctor threw an inkpot at him and frightened him away; while in Italy people said a pope who had practised the black art with assistance from the Devil was finally summoned by his master and carried off to hell.

The influence of the Evil One was seen especially in "Possessed" women, and many methods were employed to drive him out. Exorcisms for driving out evil spirits had not only the blessing of the Church, but the respectability of age, dating back to apostolic times. Another favorite method of driving out evil spirits was to place a crucifix on the body.

Concerning this method of treatment, we have a very interesting account from the pen of Prof. Anton de Haen, professor of medicine in Vienna and personal physician to the great Empress Maria Theresa. De Haen was one of that small group of Dutchmen, who did not share the Calvinistic theological views of their fellow citizens, and migrated at the invitation of Maria Theresa to Vienna, where their own religion was supreme. De Haen was a very able man and a gifted physician, but he was a Roman Catholic, not from convenience but by conviction. At Leyden no Catholic could become a professor in the University, so being unwilling to change his religion for a professorship, he moved to Vienna, where he presently obtained the coveted honor.

In Vienna, de Haen encountered some peculiar

practices of his own religion with which he was unfamiliar in his native Holland, such as driving out evil spirits with exorcisms and with crucifixes. In 1760, Anton de Haen published a text-book of medicine, one chapter of which discusses convulsions. In this chapter he writes:

Still another type of convulsions must be mentioned here, the cause of which, I relate this with shudders, is thought to be the Devil. I have seen it in both sexes. Our exalted Empress ordered that all women, whom not only the people, but also the priests declared were possessed, should be brought into the hospital, so they could be examined and observed there. I have examined these women since, according to the current belief, men can really be possessed by the Devil.

De Haen describes in some detail the observations that led him to believe the whole affair was a hoax. The possessed women, he tells us, believed they were freed from the Devil if a holy crucifix were laid upon their breasts. As soon as the crucifix was laid there, the Devil, realizing its presence, immediately departed, but in so doing stirred up such a commotion that the patient promptly had a series of convulsions. The shrewd de Haen relates that if he covered the crucifix with a cloth so the patient could not recognize it, nothing whatever occurred. He also found that if he took a piece of wood moistened with water, touched it to the patient's breast and told her it had been dipped in holy water, "then the Devil raged."

Having convinced himself that the patients were

impostors, de Haen now tells us how he treated them:

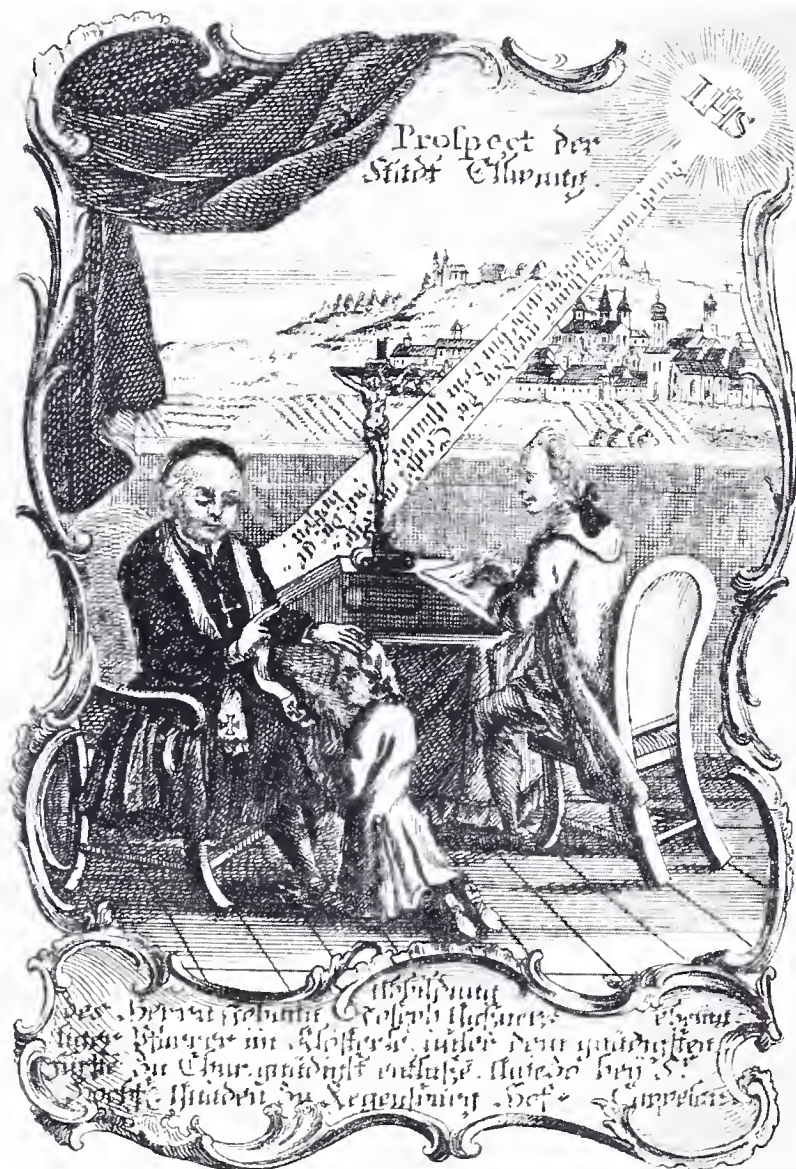
The attendants I armed with pitchers of water, lined them up in a row, and instructed them that as soon as the mention of the name of God or of the saints caused the supposed devil to shake their bodies, then the first attendant should empty his pitcher in one splash upon the patient's face and breast. If the first splash did not stop the convulsion, then each attendant in turn should empty his pitcher on the patient. To supply enough water I used a large water cask. As soon as the patients perceived that one after the other, the same fate was in store for them, they had no more convulsions and appeared completely cured.

De Haen emphasizes that he is a "true adherent of the Church" and hopes that people will not consider his treatment as a "rough and godless procedure." His experience, however, convinced him that these diseases were not due to possession by the Devil.

While de Haen was studying these patients and disproving the idea that they were possessed by the Devil, stories began to spread throughout Austria of the wonderful powers of a priest at Klosters who cured disease by casting out devils. This priest was Father Gassner, priest of Klosters, in the diocese of Chur and in the province of Graubunden or Grisons, now a canton of Switzerland.

Johann Josef Gassner was born in 1727 at Braz in Austria, and after studying at the Universities of Innsbruck and Prague, became priest at Klosters. He had served his people faithfully for some fifteen





*Father Gassner at Ellwangen*

[From a contemporary print]





years when he discovered he could heal disease, making the discovery first upon himself. He had suffered for many years from severe headaches, for which he had consulted the best doctors in Innsbruck and Prague without, however, obtaining any relief. Finally, he came to the conclusion that his headaches were of supernatural origin and that he was possessed. He read all the books he could procure on demoniacal possession and on exorcism, and finally exorcised, or drove out of his own body, the demon which possessed him. Having cured his own disease by exorcism, he began to apply the same method of treatment to the poor sufferers in his own parish.

Sufferers from various diseases soon began to flock to Klosters. At first they came singly, then in groups of fifty or sixty, and presently the numbers, according to accounts, increased tenfold. The procedure he adopted at first was both impressive and dramatic. The patient was ushered into a darkened room. Presently, the priest came in through a door hung with a heavy dark curtain. Thrusting the curtain to one side, Father Gassner in his black priestly habit, strode through the door with outstretched hands, one of which carried a crucifix held aloft. Advancing to the patient, he placed one hand upon his head and said in thundering tones in Latin:

*“Detur mihi evidens signum praestigiae praeternaturalis, praecipio hoc in nomine Jesu.”* (Let there be given me the sign of unnatural magic, I admonish this thing in the name of Jesus.)

At these words, the patient often had a convulsion produced by the demon leaving her body, then straightened up, smiled and asserted she was now quite well.

The crowds that flocked to Klosters soon became so great that Gassner asked permission of his bishop to visit other towns and heal their sick. He wished the poor unfortunates might be spared the fatigues and hardships of a trip to Klosters. The bishop gave his permission, and Father Gassner visited a number of near-by towns, casting out devils and healing the sick. At Constance, where Gassner's cures attracted great attention and drew enormous crowds, the Cardinal-Bishop became suspicious and instructed his chaplain to examine the miracle-working priest.

The examiner could find no fault with Father Gassner, who made a perfectly orthodox confession of faith and said he was neither a miracle worker nor a saint, but simply a parish priest practising the ancient and apostolic rite of exorcism. He explained to the examiner that diseases were of three kinds: those due to natural causes, which should be treated by the physician, those due to demoniac influence, which should be treated by the priest, and those due to both causes, which should be treated by both priest and physician. A treatment for demoniac possession was already prescribed by the Church—exorcism.

The rite of exorcism, or casting out devils, is one of the oldest in the Church, a rite dating from apos-



*Exorcism in the Sixteenth Century*

[From a contemporary print]



tolic days and practised by many of the fathers and saints of the Church throughout the ages. The methods of exorcism have varied slightly at times, Athanasius, Basil and Cyril finding the sign of the cross the most effective, while Origen and St. Ambrose favored the laying on of hands. The ritual of the Roman Catholic Church in Gassner's time as to-day, contains an office for casting out demons for, as Prof. Toner notes in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, "In Christian countries, authentic cases of possession sometimes occur and every priest, especially if he be a parish priest, or pastor, is liable to be called upon to perform his duty as exorcist."

Gassner obviously had the law of the Church on his side since it expressly confers the power and the duty of exorcism upon every priest. The Cardinal-Bishop, after being assured that Gassner was a man of blameless life and morals, gave him permission to continue his ministrations.

The details of Father Gassner's treatments, which have been recorded by numerous writers, make very interesting reading. Once he treated a patient suffering from cruel pains in her body and limbs, in the presence of *Hofmedicus* (Court Physician) Böttinger from Murgenthal. Father Gassner, with outstretched hands carrying the crucifix, touched the patient, commanding her to be still. Immediately she fell in a deep swoon. "Move your left arm," he commanded in Latin. She moved her left arm, at first slowly, then faster and faster. "*Cesset*," he cried. The arm was



still. The father raised his crucifix. Immediately she made horrible grimaces and jumped wildly about the room. He cried suddenly, "*Cesset*," and she became still. He commanded her pulse to beat slowly. Hofmedicus Böttinger felt it and declared it was slow. He then commanded her pulse to beat rapidly, and the doctor counted 120 beats to the minute. Father Gassner now told her to lie down on the floor and die slowly, and that after a short time he would call her back to life. The girl became unconscious, her pulse became slower and weaker, she became deathly pale, and appeared dead. "She is dead," cried one of the witnesses. "See the death sweat," cried another. "The pulse no longer beats," announced the Hofmedicus gravely. Father Gassner now thundered in Latin, "I command you in the name of the Lord to return to life." Immediately her pulse began to beat, color returned to her face, she arose from the floor with a delighted expression and declared all of her pains had left her. Father Gassner was happy at her cure; those present told their friends he could raise the dead. Whether he willed it or not, people called him a miracle-worker.

Miracle-workers always tread on dangerous ground. They attract great crowds, among them devoted followers, but also carping critics and bitter skeptics. Father Gassner traveled over Switzerland, Austria, and Germany followed by great crowds of people, among whom were not only Catholics but Protestants and Jews as well. Many of the Protestants, we

are told, regarded the whole procedure with amusement, but his most vindictive enemies were within the folds of his own church. The most formidable of these were the redoubtable Prof. de Haen at Vienna and Father Sterzinger of Munich, a monk of the Theatine Order.

Prof. de Haen never saw Gassner nor any of his cures, but received reports from his correspondents. After sifting the evidence, he wrote a book expressing his belief that Gassner's cures were beyond a rational and natural explanation. They were not miracles, since they caused scandal and not edification. Therefore, they were manifestations of some evil power.

Father Sterzinger was a more persistent opponent. He journeyed to Ratisbon, where Gassner was casting out devils, and later wrote a book describing Gassner's methods and their results. He describes the blind priest of Hettingen, who had cataracts, and in spite of Father Gassner's treatments, "was not a pin better than he had been before." The lame Chaplain of Schönberg was persuaded by Father Gassner to walk, "but he had to be led, and suffered with each step so much from the pain, that he ground his teeth." Father Sterzinger says those that seemed cured later relapsed, that many patients who were half-blind became totally blind and many melancholics later became totally insane.

Despite opposition, Father Gassner's work prospered. Also the numbers of those possessed grew by

leaps and bounds until they reached the proportions of an epidemic. The authorities became alarmed, the Bishop of Constance, the Archbishops of Prague and of Salzburg forbade Gassner's "practising" in their dioceses, and the Emperor Joseph II, by imperial decree, expelled him from Ratisbon. He continued his healing in the town of Ellwangen to which he drew enormous crowds. One visitor to what he calls "The bewitched town of Ellwangen" says the town was overflowing with people from every part of Germany, from France, Switzerland, Poland, and Italy. The apothecaries sold eye powders, universal powders, healing oils and medicinal teas which they claimed had been blessed by Father Gassner.

Father Gassner was finally forced to abandon his healing practices and returned to his duties as a parish priest. He was soon forgotten by the world and died at the age of fifty-two at Pondorf, in the diocese of Ratisbon. Despite all the bitter controversies over Gassner's cures, no one at any time insinuated that he ever received a penny for his treatments. He was unquestionably a man of the highest integrity and sincere in his belief that he could cure certain diseases by exorcising the Devil.

Dr. Anton de Haen, one of his chief opponents, never took the trouble to go in person and witness his treatments. However, a student of de Haen did see Father Gassner's demonstration with the result that the whole course of his life was changed. This man was Franz Anton Mesmer.

Franz Anton Mesmer was born in 1734 near Lake Constance in Germany and studied medicine under de Haen in Vienna. It was while Mesmer was a student in Vienna that Leopold Auenbrugger discovered percussion and published his *Inventum Novum*, which describes this method of examination, but this discovery, which revolutionized the practice of medicine, seems to have made no impression upon young Mesmer. He was interested in what he considered greater things so, when he graduated as doctor of medicine in 1766, wrote his doctor's thesis on *The Influence of Planets (De planetarum influxu)*, only two copies of which exist to-day.

In this extraordinary thesis, he advanced the theory that just as there exists a well-known attraction between planets, so these heavenly bodies exercise a direct effect upon all the tissues of the human body. This influence is produced by a mysterious fluid which penetrates all substances, both living and inanimate. He maintained that just as the changes in gravitation produce the tides, these changes produce alterations in the body. Changes in the temperature in fever and alterations in the strength of patients were due, he said, to the movements of the planets. This property of the human body which made it susceptible to the influence of the planets and of the earth, he called "animal magnetism."

Following this line of reasoning, Mesmer began to treat patients with magnets, because, "I had the usual knowledge about the magnet—its action on

iron and the readiness of our humors to combine with this mineral." While somewhat obscure, this line of reasoning illustrates quite well the ease with which Mesmer leaped over any gaps in his train of thought. The magnets were supplied him by the Royal Astronomer, Father Hell who, because of his studies of planets was interested in Mesmer and his astronomical medical ideas. Mesmer claimed many striking cures of various diseases and sought to impress his colleagues with his great discovery. The men of science in Vienna were, however, unimpressed, and the general verdict was that he knew little of physics and still less of physic.

Ten years after his graduation in medicine, Mesmer met Father Gassner and saw the striking cures produced by the laying on of hands. Mesmer wrote, "An ecclesiastic, a man of good faith but of excessive zeal, wrought in the diocese of Ratisbon, on different patients of the nervous class, effects which appeared to be supernatural. My experience had already taught me that this man was in this matter only the instrument of nature." Mesmer felt that Gassner had obtained these cures, not through exorcism, but by means of animal magnetism. When he returned to Vienna, Mesmer discarded his magnets and laid on his hands, the magnetic fluid no longer coming from the magnets, but from his own body. He conducted it through his fingers to the afflicted.

Soon after his return to Vienna, Mesmer undertook the cure of a certain Fräulein Paradis, aged

eighteen, who had been blind since the age of four. In his book on animal magnetism, Mesmer describes her case in great detail, and in his characteristically involved and obscure style.

Fräulein Paradis came to Mesmer with statements that she had been blind for fourteen years—a physician, Dr. von Störck, one of the best known doctors in Vienna, having treated her for ten years without success. In order to treat the patient properly, Mesmer took the young lady into his home where, according to his statement, he cured her of her blindness. Dissatisfied with the treatment, the girl's mother came to fetch her home and a very tempestuous scene ensued. The girl had a convulsion and the mother, in a rage, seized her and threw her against the wall. To quote from Mesmer's account:

I hastened to her assistance; the mother still furious threw herself upon me, loading me with abuse. I got her away with the help of certain members of my family, and went back to her daughter to render assistance. Whilst I was busy with her, I heard fresh screams of rage and repeated efforts to open and shut alternatively the door of the room in which I was. It was Herr Paradis, who, on the information of a servant of his wife, had forced his way into my house. . . . The madman was disarmed, and left my house, after showering imprecations on me and my family.

Mesmer relates that the girl now had several convulsions and became blind again but was restored to health after two weeks' treatment. Mesmer later



sent the girl back to her parents who, however, "spread about that she was still blind and had convulsions, and presented her as such, forcing her to imitate convulsions and blindness."

From Mesmer's rather incoherent account, it is impossible to decide whether the girl was blind or was cured. The statements of his inveterate enemies in the medical profession are, perhaps, too biased and vituperative to be considered impartial testimony. We have, however, one excellent witness who was not interested in Mesmer's quarrels with the Viennese doctors—Baron Friedrich von Grimm, the well-known author and critic. He states that Fräulein Paradis came to Paris in 1784 (five years after her treatment by Mesmer) and astonished the public by her skilful playing on the spinet, in spite of the fact that she was totally blind!

Soon after the Paradis episode, Mesmer shook the dust of Vienna from his shoes and moved to Paris. Here he communicated his discovery to the Academy of Science and to the Academy of Medicine. These two learned bodies asked him to demonstrate his new method of treatment under properly controlled conditions. Mesmer refused, offering them testimonials instead. The scientists were unimpressed, and Mesmer turned in disgust from them to the public.

Mesmer announced that all diseases were due to one cause and, therefore, should be treated by one method—animal magnetism. A man of distinguished

bearing and presence and from Austria, he soon won the confidence of the Queen of France—Marie Antoinette. Marie Antoinette intervened with the king's ministers, and Mesmer was received in audience. He stated that his method needed no scientific testing since it was in the nature of a revelation, and not being an excessively modest person, he asked as a reward for his discovery, the grant of an estate and a château, to be chosen by himself. The ministers countered by offering him an annual income of \$4,000 with an additional \$2,000 to support a clinic in which he should train persons in his methods.

Mesmer refused this offer and departed for Spa, followed by a group of admirers and disciples. His departure from Paris, unlike that from Vienna, was not unnoticed. He had given many exhibitions of his magnetic powers, and many, especially ladies in the court circles, had been greatly impressed by his demonstrations. Saturated with the increasing rationalism of the day, people turned with delight to the weird and mysterious. Lafayette, back from his triumphs in America and now a commanding figure in France, championed Mesmer's cause. This action we know was no idle pose, for later, on the eve of his departure for America, Lafayette wrote his friend, Washington, that he was bringing him something more valuable than soldiers or cannon, "the secret of Mesmer which is a great philosophical discovery," adding that he was one of Mesmer's most enthusiastic pupils. A stock company was formed to

finance Mesmer's discovery, \$70,000 being subscribed. With a fine appreciation of the mysterious, Mesmer suggested to the subscribers, "Let us be a secret society called 'Harmony' and I will reveal my secret to the founders."

Mesmer now returned to Paris and there soon appeared what has been described as a veritable epidemic of mesmeromania. His name was on every tongue, his consulting-rooms were congested with people from all walks of life, suffering from every imaginable disease, neurotic women of the upper classes predominating. Before Mesmer's house in the Place Vendôme, aristocratic carriages with liveried drivers and lackeys drew up from early morning until late at night. The crowds were so great that the patients had to reserve places in his treatment-rooms days or weeks in advance. When the patient was finally fortunate enough to be ushered into the salon, he found the room darkened and, in the dim twilight, saw a group of people seated in a circle with joined hands around a large tub, or *Baquet*, from which at various places, iron bars protruded. These iron bars were charged with animal magnetism which flowed over into the circle of people when the bars were touched. No one moved, no one spoke, but from an adjoining room, the soft music of a choir floated into the darkened salon.

At the proper moment, Mesmer appeared, clad in a lilac silk robe and carrying a magic wand. Moving slowly around, he presently touched one of



*Mesmer's Baquet*  
[From a contemporary print]





the group with his wand. Immediately the person touched began to twitch and writhe, and soon all in the circle became agitated. These were the "crises" which it was necessary to produce before treatment could be attempted. These crises had a profound similarity to the convulsions produced by Father Gassner when he discovered the Devil in possessed patients. Mesmer now stilled these paroxysms by another stroke of the wand. Occasionally, this failed to stop the paroxysms and it became necessary to remove the patient to a padded room (*salle des crises*), where the paroxysm was allowed to wear itself out. Patients flocked to Mesmer, and mesmerism became by far the most interesting subject of the day.

Presently, the concourse of people was so great that Mesmer was compelled to select assistants to help in his work. According to his enemies, Mesmer was careful to choose assistants who were young and handsome. Malicious tongues soon spread the story that many young women who went to Mesmer did not go there to be magnetized. To add to the excitement, the Harmony Society began to take root in various parts of France so that soon not only Paris, but all France was suffering from mesmeromania.

In 1784, the King appointed a commission to investigate mesmerism. The commission contained some well-known names, including our own Benjamin Franklin, Dr. Guillotine—who contrary to popular impression did not invent the guillotine



but simply recommended that decapitation be no longer the privilege of the noble but the method of execution for all—and Lavoisier, the great chemist, who was so soon to die himself by the guillotine during the Revolution. The commission decided among other things that “imagination without magnetism produces convulsions and that magnetism without imagination produces nothing.” They concluded further that “nothing proves the existence of the animal magnetic fluid; that this nonexistent fluid is therefore useless.”

Mesmer's séances flourished in spite of the thunder of the scientists. Then suddenly his fame evaporated. The revolutionary mob crushed what the scientists had been unable to check. The revolution made the aristocratic ladies more interested in saving their heads than in having their crises. Mesmer fled from Paris as Robespierre was rising to power.

Franz Mesmer fled first to London, then to Vienna and finally settled down in Meersburg on Lake Constance, where he died at the age of eighty-one, twenty-three years after he had left Paris. His last years were spent in comparative obscurity, practising medicine, not magnetism. His passing was unnoticed by the world at large.

As mentioned before, Lafayette wrote his friend George Washington that on this occasion he was bringing to the new republic something more valuable than soldiers or cannon which he had previously brought. He was bringing the secret of Mesmer.

If he had come a few years later, Washington might have shown him something equally startling—a pair of Perkins' Tractors.

These remarkable tractors were the invention of Dr. Elisha Perkins of Plainfield, Connecticut, a man whose name, albeit now forgotten, was well known to our ancestors who founded this republic. His title of Doctor would seem to have been a courtesy title since there is no evidence that he ever graduated from a medical school. His father was, however, a well-known physician, and the son, after studying under his father and serving as his assistant, settled down to practice in Plainfield. He was a man of striking appearance, six feet tall, and his biographer tells us that "he frequently rode sixty miles a day, and generally on horseback, and this without the aid of artificial stimulants, never making use of ardent spirits." He numbered among his patients some of the most prominent people in the colony and during the Revolutionary War served as surgeon in the Continental Army. He seemed destined to a long and honorable career as a leader of the medical profession, but fate willed otherwise.

One day, while performing a surgical operation, he observed that each time he touched the muscle with a metallic instrument it contracted. He repeated the experiment with various other materials, but nothing except metal produced the contractions. Soon after, he noticed that when he separated an ulcerated tooth from the gum with a knife, the pain

was relieved; also that stroking an inflamed part with a metal instrument lessened the pain. These observations made a deep impression on Perkins. Obviously, metal had some remarkable power over pain. He pondered the matter deeply and investigated.

As the result of his investigations, he constructed two tractors, or pieces of metal, round on one side and flat on the other, round at one end and pointed at the other. These tractors were made, one of brass and one of iron in a small furnace at his home. On the flat side of each was stamped the words "Perkins' Patent Tractors."

Dr. Perkins now tried the effects of his tractors upon various diseases, with results far exceeding his fondest expectations. By stroking with his metallic tractors, he could remove rheumatism, gout, pleurisy, eye inflammations, erysipelas, epilepsy, lock-jaw, sprains, and pain in the head, teeth, ears, breast, side, back, and limbs!

Flushed with success, Perkins communicated his discovery to his medical society, where his report was received "by some with doubt and caution and by others even with contempt." Nettled at their lack of appreciation, Dr. Perkins determined to appeal to the public, moved to Philadelphia, and furnished the newspapers with thrilling stories of his new discovery.

The move to Philadelphia was well timed. Congress was in session and the city was filled with

people eager for a new thrill. Perkins furnished it. Soon every one was talking of Perkins and of his great discovery. Hospitals and almshouses opened their doors to him, and the Board of Managers of the Almshouse purchased the patent rights to manufacture the metallic tractors for Philadelphia. Congress was much impressed, many congressmen bought tractors; the Chief Justice of the United States bought a pair for his own use and gave Perkins a letter to John Marshall, praising the tractors. The crowning achievement, however, was the sale of a set to the President, George Washington, for use in his own family.

Although Perkins impressed Philadelphia, congressmen, the chief justice and the President, he failed to impress the Medical Society of Connecticut. At their next meeting, they formally expelled Elisha Perkins, because of the rule "interdicting their members the use of Nostrums."

In spite of Perkins' disgrace at the hands of his colleagues, the sale of tractors went merrily on at thirty guineas a pair, "in a red morocco case." A gentleman in Virginia sold his plantation and took the pay in tractors, while many sold their horses and carriages to buy them.

In the midst of this rush for tractors, yellow fever descended upon New York. Perkins was sure he had a powerful remedy, a mixture of vinegar, muriatic acid, and hot water. He rushed to New York to demonstrate his discovery, but contracted yellow

fever there and died in 1799. With the passing of this forceful figure, the vogue for Perkins' Tractors waned and then flickered out in the new American Republic. In the Mother Country they were, however, just coming into their own.

Four years before his death, Elisha Perkins had sent his son, Benjamin Perkins, a recent graduate of Yale, to England as his agent for the sale of the tractors. Benjamin Perkins carried excellent letters of recommendation, one from the Governor of Connecticut recommending the young man and extolling the virtues of the tractors. Young Perkins made excellent contacts in England and presently opened the "Perkinean Institute" in London, with the Right Honorable Lord Rivers as president. Among the patrons of the institute were eight professors, forty physicians, and thirty clergymen.

Perkins' Tractors created intense excitement in England. Poets composed odes about them, punsters sang ballads about them and the great comic artist, Gillroy, drew caricatures of them. This publicity increased their sales.

Many British physicians, like Perkins' colleagues in the Connecticut Medical Society considered the tractors "nostrums." Dr. Haygarth, a famous physician of Bath, demonstrated some astonishing cures with the tractors and then startled his auditors by snapping the tractors between his fingers and telling them they were made of wood. At Bristol, patients were stroked with slate pencils and tobacco pipes,

and marvelous cures wrought. Dr. Alderson used sham tractors made of wood and produced such astounding cures on five patients that they gave public thanks in church. These medical critics wrote pamphlets against the tractors, asserting they had thus proved that imagination, not the tractors, produced the cures.

Benjamin Perkins became alarmed at these blasts against the tractors. He deserted his noble friends, sailed from England with some £10,000 in his pockets and entered the book business in New York. With the departure of the chief stroker, the Perkinian Institute collapsed and the tractor traffic disappeared just as it had in America. To-day the story of Perkins' Tractors is a forgotten episode in the cultural history both of America and England.

From Valentine Greatrakes, whom God had endowed with miraculous healing powers, and from Father Gassner, who exorcised devils in the name of the Lord, to Franz Mesmer, who derived his powers from the planets, and to Elisha Perkins, whose powers came from metallic tractors, we may discern, perhaps, evidence of the increasing materialism of the centuries. All four had certain striking characteristics in common. Each, in his own way, had a commanding appearance, each was convinced of his own powers, each believed sincerely in his mission and most significant of all—each laid on hands, either directly or through a wand or tractor. No one who has read with care the career of Valentine Great-



rakes would call him a charlatan or a quack. Every action, every line he wrote breathes honesty and sincerity. Father Gassner was firmly convinced that some diseases were due to demons and that he could exorcise them and cure the sufferers. When his ecclesiastical superiors ordered him to cease his ministrations, he obeyed like a dutiful son of the church, but he did not repudiate his beliefs. Mesmer has often been referred to as a charlatan and a master humbug. That he did a little "humbuggery," he admits himself. Most quacks when their course has run try a new form of quackery. Dr. Egg, who visited Mesmer after he had retired to Meersburg and was practising more or less orthodox medicine, says that the old gentleman still retained all of his ideas on magnetism and talked of his old life in Paris with both enthusiasm and pride. Whether he made large sums of money by mesmerism has been often debated. Benjamin Franklin, in 1785, wrote to a friend about Mesmer remarking, "I suppose all the physicians in France put together, have not made as much money during the time he has been here as he has done." Mesmer's later life, however, suggests that if he had made a great deal of money, he had lost it. Elisha Perkins, alone of the four, made money in large amounts through his tractors at thirty guineas a pair. The adjectives "notorious" and "avaricious" and the nouns "swindler" and "quack," which were applied to him may have been both accurate and just. Yet, he may have been sincere. He had enough

faith in his cure of yellow fever to risk and lose his life in trying to prove the value of his remedy.

Father Gassner and Franz Mesmer have been claimed by hypnotists as one of their own. A popular book on hypnotism calls Father Gassner "a cunning hypnotist" and describes Mesmer as the "discoverer of the germs of the science."

Modern hypnotism, however, began with the observations of the Marquis de Puységur, a disciple of Mesmer, that he could induce a state of somnambulism by an appropriate technic. James Braid of Manchester, England, continued these studies, but fought the ideas of magnetism and called the phenomena, hypnotism. Later, the great French neurologist, Charcot, became interested in the subject and, in 1882, read a paper before the Paris Academy of Sciences describing his experiences with hypnotism. Pierre Janet remarks, "It must not be forgotten that the Academy had already thrice condemned all researches into animal magnetism, and that it was a signal exploit to make this learned assembly listen to a lengthy description of kindred phenomena." Charcot regarded hypnotism as a form of hysteria. Bernheim attacked Charcot's views and showed that many people, who were not hysterical, could be hypnotized. To Bernheim, the whole phenomenon was one of suggestion, and the hypnotic state simply sleep induced by suggestion. What a distance from Mesmer's ideas of a magnetic fluid coming from the planets! Yet the whole story is but a series of chap-

ters through which runs the same thread of faith that created Epidaurus and sustained Lourdes.

Did Greatrakes, Gassner, Mesmer, and Perkins actually cure their patients? The answer would seem to be that, if suggestible, their symptoms were cured. Harriet Martineau was relieved of uterine symptoms by mesmerism although an autopsy after her death showed that she had a uterine tumor. But all people are not suggestible. One eminent American divine, who had bought a pair of Perkins' Tractors, was asked regarding their merits. He answered, "I have found them useful in picking walnuts."

## *Chapter X*

### MIND, SOUL, AND BODY

**D**URING those last years while he was practising medicine in the little town of Meersburg on Lake Constance, Franz Anton Mesmer probably felt that he had lived in vain. He had given mankind a great discovery only to see himself ridiculed and reviled, forced to leave his triumphs in Paris and to spend his days as an obscure country doctor in a small village. But his work did not die with him; like the soul of John Brown, it went marching on.

As we have seen, the Marquis of Puységur was magnetizing patients on his estate even before Mesmer had left Paris. One of these patients, a young shepherd named Victor, failed to respond with a "crisis" in the orthodox Mesmerian fashion. Instead, he went to sleep and apparently still asleep, he presently rose, walked about and obeyed all of Puységur's orders, completely under his domination. Later, he awoke and was completely cured of his complaints, though he remembered nothing of the recent occurrences. This condition of sleepwalking, Puységur

called somnambulism, because of its obvious resemblance to natural somnambulism, or walking in one's sleep, a phenomenon with which every one is familiar.

The French Révolution, with its accompanying upheavals, diverted attention from mesmerism, magnetism, and somnambulism. Later, as life began to flow in calmer channels, magnetizers and magnetic societies began to spring up all over France like veritable mushrooms. Magnetic societies were founded in Paris, in Rennes, in Troyes, in Caen, in Rheims, in London, and in far-away New Orleans. Eight journals of magnetism were published in France alone and one in London, and hospitals for magnetic treatment were established in London and in Calcutta.

Magnetism invaded the church and the stage. Father Lacordaire, the most famous preacher in Paris, whose eloquence drew vast crowds to Notre Dame, preached about magnetism, declaring it to be the power Adam lost when he was driven from the Garden of Eden, and the prophets the first upon whom it was later bestowed. On the stage, magnetism became the most popular theme. In Alexander Dumas' famous play, *Urbain Grandier*, the author demonstrates the ease with which access to a convent may be achieved by magnetizing the portress, the Mother Superior, and any nuns who may appear.

The usual method of treating patients was to bring them to some one who had been "somnambu-

lized." The somnambulist, who had become "lucid," in this condition could see inside the patient and discover his ills. Typical diagnoses were, "This patient's stomach is full of pimples," "I see a ball of hair blocking the bowel," and "Your lungs are full of dust." Having made the diagnosis, the somnambulist now prescribed for the ailment. One well-known somnambulist was fond of prescribing that the patient's chest should be ironed with a hot flat-iron, while another often prescribed a powder made from the callosities of a horse's leg—an unusual prescription which invariably impressed the patients. One well-known magnetizer, Dr. Clapier, wrote that he had produced sixty cures in two months, adding modestly, "Indeed, I have nothing to do with the cure, for I have merely carried out the prescriptions of the somnambulist."

The success of the magnetizers in France inspired these men with a true missionary zeal to spread their gospel throughout the world and particularly to the New World. In 1838, a French magnetizer, Charles Poyen, appeared in the state of Maine and gave lectures at Portland and at Belfast, where he exhibited somnambulists who showed their remarkable powers. One man in his audience at Belfast, a watchmaker, was filled with enthusiasm by the demonstrations and was convinced that he, too, had magnetic powers. This man was Phineas Parkhurst Quimby.

Quimby was born in 1802 in New Hampshire, but had lived in Belfast since the age of two, and was



thirty-four years of age when he saw Poyen's demonstration. His father was a blacksmith with a family of seven children. Because of his father's scanty means, Park Quimby, as he was commonly called, received little education. His biographer and disciple, Horatio W. Dresser, remarks, "His education in the schools was so meagre that he did not learn to spell and punctuate as most writers do. But when he misspelled, he did so uniformly, and his phonetic spellings are convenient means of identification in his manuscripts. The same is true of his peculiar use of words." He showed early considerable mechanical ability and finally settled down as a watchmaker. As Dresser writes, "In his occupation as watch and clock maker, there is no hint of his peculiar ability in discerning the human heart."

Quimby was keenly aware of his scanty educational equipment and made every effort to improve himself by self-education. He sought the conversation of educated persons, read all the books he could secure on philosophy and science and, in this manner, developed a mind naturally alert and inquisitive. He was one of the most interested persons among the audience that listened to the lecture of Monsieur Poyen and watched his demonstration of somnambulism.

At the close of the lecture, Quimby made the acquaintance of the Frenchman, who was much impressed by his bearing and obvious sincerity, and assured him that he, too, possessed remarkable mag-

netic powers. Quimby now followed Poyen from town to town, watching his remarkable demonstrations of somnambulism and becoming more and more certain that he, too, had these same powers of magnetizing.

Quimby returned home and began to test out his own powers. After many failures, he found a young man, Lucius Burkmar, over whom he had remarkable influence. Burkmar, apparently, was one of those persons designated by the French magnetizers as an "ultra-lucid somnambulist," and Quimby's son George, writing of his father's success with Burkmar says, "It is not stating it too strongly to assert that with him, he made some of the most astonishing exhibitions of mesmerism and clairvoyance that have been given in modern times."

Quimby traveled throughout Maine and New Brunswick for several years with young Burkmar, giving exhibitions and curing the sick. The technic he employed was identical with that used by the French magnetizers. He put Lucius Burkmar into a state of somnambulism, bade him look into the patient, describe the state of his organs, and prescribe the necessary remedies.

In the beginning, Quimby was convinced that he produced the state of somnambulism through animal magnetism, and that electricity in some way produced the phenomena. He never magnetized Lucius unless the weather conditions were right, and found that, during a thunderstorm, his attempts to mag-

netize were failures. One evening, however, he was so intent upon some successful experiments that he failed to observe a thunderstorm outside. When his attention was called to the fact that he had magnetized in spite of the storm without, he immediately decided that weather had nothing whatever to do with his powers of magnetizing. From that time, he could magnetize Lucius in any kind of weather.

Quimby and Burkmar created quite a stir in New England. In many places, the audiences were hostile and jeered the demonstration, but all in all, Quimby emerged from them with increased prestige and what was more important with a steadily increasing clientèle.

What the medical profession to-day would think of his cures, one can readily imagine. Here was a young lad of seventeen, without any knowledge of anatomy, physiology, or pharmacology, who, under the influence of magnetism, could look into the body of the patient, observe his organs function, describe the pathological condition present, and prescribe remedies to restore his diseased organs to health.

Apparently certain physicians in 1842 found nothing illogical in this procedure. Dr. Albert T. Wheelock of Belfast, writing of the remarkable powers exhibited by young Lucius, says:

I have good reason to believe that he can discern the internal structure of an animal body, and if there be anything morbid or defective therein, detect and ex-

plain it. The important advantage of this surgery and medicine is obvious enough. . . . He can perceive without using either of the common organs of perception. His mind, when he is mesmerised, seems to have no relation to body, distance, place, time, or motion. He passes from Belfast to Washington, or from the earth to the moon, not as horses, steam engines or light, but swifter than light, by a single act of volition.

Dr. Wheelock, in another interesting letter, tells of a patient upon whom he operated for a polyp of the nose. The patient wished to be "magnetized" for the operation. Mr. Quimby, "who had the reputation of being a good magnetizer," was called in, and magnetized the patient. The polyp was removed without the patient's showing the slightest sign of pain. Ten minutes later, the patient awoke and had no memory whatever of the operation.

One day while Quimby and Lucius were treating a patient, Lucius prescribed a drug which was quite expensive. Quimby remonstrated that the patient was very poor, so Lucius promptly changed the prescription to an inexpensive drug. The inexpensive drug proved quite as effective as the expensive one. This experience opened Quimby's eyes. He soon decided that the effect of the medicine was not due to the drug itself, but to the patient's faith in the efficacy of the drug.

Quimby presently decided that all his cures were due to the faith he had inspired in patients rather than to the drugs prescribed. He dismissed Lucius

Burkmar, he abandoned magnetism, or mesmerism. In a letter written to a friend several years after, Quimby says: "It is twenty years since I first embarked in what was one of the greatest humbugs of the age, mesmerism. At that time the people were as superstitious about it as they were two hundred years ago in regard to witchcraft."

Quimby's ideas were now crystallized. All the mystery of magnetism or mesmerism, of somnambulism, of cures by these methods, were solved. It was simply the power of mind over mind and of mind over body. He now devoted himself to working out and elaborating his ideas of the Mind Cure. He changed his methods of treatment and the Bangor *Jeffersonian*, in 1857, noted that "his first course in the treatment of a patient is to sit down beside him and put himself *en rapport* with him, which he does without producing the mesmeric sleep." He also began the composition of the *Quimby Manuscripts* in which he wrote down his experiences and his philosophy.

Quimby, with his new technic, had even greater success than before. People came from great distances to see him, and it was said he had solved the riddle of life, made the blind to see, and the deaf to hear. One patient, a minister, after being cured, declared that Quimby "seemed to reproduce the wonders of Gospel history." Rumors spread that Quimby could work miracles, and was the recipient of Divine revelation. These rumors Quimby





*P. P. Quimby*

[From H. W. Dresher, *The Quimby  
Manuscripts*, by permission of  
W. Frederick Keeler]



*John Alexander Dowie*





promptly denied in an essay, "Defence against an Accusation of making Myself equal to Christ."

Quimby never claimed any divine assistance or revelation. His son tells us that, although of a deeply religious nature, he belonged to no sect or church. His writings disclose a degree of unorthodoxy remarkable for his time:

Jesus was a man of flesh and blood like any one else. . . . I look on church-prayers as I do on all other errors that have been invented to govern mankind and keep the people in ignorance of themselves and God. . . . I oppose all religion based on the opinions of men, and as God never gave an opinion, I am not bound to believe that man's opinions are from God.

Quimby's place in history, despite his great local success, would have been of no more importance than that of scores of successful healers, clairvoyants, and magnetizers who flourished at that epoch, had it not been for one famous patient. This lady, unwittingly and certainly unwillingly, has made this niche for him.

On October 14, 1861, Quimby received a letter from Dr. D. Patterson of Rumney, New Hampshire, saying that, "My wife has been an invalid for a number of years; is not able to sit up but a little, and we wish to have the benefit of your wonderful power in her case." It was, however, about a year before the patient was ushered into Quimby's private office.

Dr. Patterson's wife was some forty years of age and a rather forlorn and faded little lady. From early

childhood she had suffered from nervous disorders and from hallucinations, falling to the ground, grinding her teeth, rolling about and uttering cries. Sometimes she had convulsive seizures and at other times she would lie rigid for hours, quite unconscious. Her family doctor assured her parents it was nothing dangerous, only hysteria, and the family let it go at that. Her husband, Dr. Patterson, a dentist, was a great, hearty bluff fellow who had suffered from his wife's "spells" some eight years before he wrote Quimby. Her spells increased in frequency, and the climax came one day when she slipped on an icy curbstone and was stunned by the fall. When she recovered, she had a paralysis of the lower limbs.

Mrs. Patterson and Mr. Quimby were attracted to each other from the start. After hearing her history, Quimby saw in her a wonderful subject for study, while she was fascinated by the majesty of his appearance and by the authority with which every word and look was clothed. The paralysis disappeared in a few days.

Mrs. Patterson lingered in Portland with Quimby. He already had several disciples who were studying his methods of healing and reading his *Manuscripts*. This group Mrs. Patterson joined. She was as fascinated with the *Manuscripts* as with their author. Life seemed full of happiness. She wrote a sonnet praising Quimby and a letter recounting her own miraculous cure. Both were published in the Portland *Courier*.

Mrs. Patterson presently returned home, but apparently found life with her husband very uncongenial, since his nature, according to her, "craved the fleshpots, the gauds, and baubles of sentimentalism." She also relates that he presently "eloped with a married woman from one of the wealthy families of that city." Mrs. Patterson resumed the name of her first husband, Washington Glover, and was Mrs. Glover for eleven years until at the age of fifty-six she married Gilbert Eddy. History calls her Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy.

Quimby's *Manuscripts*, which Mrs. Mary Baker Patterson read with such absorbing interest, developed the idea enunciated by their author that disease is a state of mind. Indeed, many passages in Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy's later works have a familiar ring to one who has read Quimby's manuscripts. Quimby writes:

Suppose a person believes he has a tumor in his left side. His error believes in the idea of tumors independent of his mind; he then admits an error to begin with. His mind gives direction to matter and the idea is formed; this seems to be proof that there is such a thing as a tumor. No one will deny that one is a phenomenon brought about by false knowledge, and that true knowledge or Science can destroy that tumor or idea and establish a knowledge of the truth that will prevent the person from being deceived into that error again.

Quimby was true to his own doctrines. He suffered for several years from an abdominal tumor

which he asserted he kept under mental control. It finally eluded this control and caused his death in 1866. When Mrs. Patterson heard the sad news she wrote a poem entitled, "Lines on the Death of Dr. P. P. Quimby, Who Healed with the Truth that Christ Taught in Contradistinction to All Isms." She wrote a letter to Mr. Julius Dresser, one of Quimby's disciples, expressing her great affection for Dr. Quimby and voicing the hope that Dresser "would step forward into the place he had vacated."

No one, we are told, who looked into the eyes of Park Quimby ever doubted his sincerity. A century has passed since he first saw the French magnetizer, Charles Poyen, and nothing has been written or spoken since that day which impugns his honesty or sincerity. We can not say so much for the next two characters under discussion.

Some ten years after the French mesmerist, Charles Poyen, demonstrated the new science before the astonished eyes of Phineas Quimby, a son and an heir was born into the good Scotch family of Dowie in Edinburgh. The son was christened John Alexander, almost with prophetic instinct, when we consider his later career, since John means the gift of Jehovah and Alexander, the protector of men.

John Alexander at an early age showed a most ferocious antipathy to alcohol. One of his biographers sketches a dramatic picture of young John, aged six and in a pinafore, a temperance petition in his hands, running around the streets of Edin-

burgh seeking signers. It is also stated on reliable authority that about the same time, he saved his weekly tuppence allowance until he was able to buy a quantity of taffy balls, with which he persuaded the street urchins to join the British League for Juvenile Abstainers.

While still a boy, he went to South Australia with his parents, but presently returned to Edinburgh, where he entered the University as a student of theology. Some six years later he again returned to Australia, as pastor of the Congregational Church at Newtown, New South Wales, near the city of Sydney. A man of striking appearance, of commanding personality and a powerful preacher, he soon attracted a large following. Here in Newtown he discovered that he had not only the ability to preach, but that he also had the gift of healing. Dowie tells us in his own words how he discovered the gift while sitting at the bedside of a young woman who was desperately ill of a "putrid fever."

"Oh, I thought, for some sharp sword of heavenly temper, keen to slay the cruel foe who is strangling that lovely maiden like an invisible serpent, tightening his deadly coils for a final victory. In a strange way it came to pass. I found the sword I needed was in my hands."

Dowie prayed over the maiden, laid his hands upon her, and she was healed. This success fired him to test his powers further. He laid his hands upon more sufferers and they were healed.



Dowie now made a momentous decision. He had become convinced that it was unscriptural to receive a regular salary as a Christian minister, and also that the Church had departed from the apostolic practice of healing. He withdrew from the Congregational ministry, moved to Melbourne, where he built a large tabernacle by free-will offerings, and began to preach and to heal the sick. Henceforth, he received no salary from any ecclesiastical body, but lived entirely from free-will offerings, which, he soon found, far exceeded any salaries paid by churches in Australia or elsewhere. The Congregational Church, he described later as "the Synagogue of Satan," adding, "I know, because I was there."

He next founded "The Divine Healing Association of Australia and New Zealand," the cathedral of which, if we may employ that term, was his tabernacle in Melbourne. He attracted large crowds by his powerful preaching and continued to demonstrate his powers of healing to the astonished multitudes. The authorities, however, regarded him with suspicion, and after numerous encounters with the law and an intimate acquaintance with several prisons, Dowie decided Australia was not yet ready for his message, and determined to go to the Land of Opportunity. In 1888, accompanied by his wife, son, and daughter, he landed in San Francisco.

At that time San Francisco was much more familiar than any other part of the United States with events in the Antipodes. News from Australia was

quite as interesting as that from Maine. Dowie's career was not unknown to the people of San Francisco, so he did not arrive merely as an obscure traveler. Several ministers of San Francisco, impressed by the magnificent bearing of the new preacher, and convinced of his sincerity and piety, invited him to occupy their pulpits. Dowie accepted with alacrity, and, to the amazement of his hosts, devoted his time in the pulpit to a denunciation of organized religion and of pastors who received salaries. This, naturally, was a little too much for the pastors, the invitations were withdrawn, and all the pulpits closed to the new-comer from Australia.

This was, however, an old story to Dowie, who had already perfected a technic to cope with such situations. He hired a large hall and was soon preaching to crowds and healing the sick just as he had in Melbourne, before the unsympathetic authorities had laid hands upon him. San Francisco, however, did not satisfy Dowie's restless spirit. Two years later we find him in Evanston, Illinois, preaching and healing and still searching for a golden opportunity to spread his gospel. It came three years later.

The Chicago World's Fair of 1893 marked an epoch in American history. No exposition since has attracted so much attention or been remembered so well. Many people of the present generation date events from the year of the Fair. It represents the high-water mark of popular interest for American

expositions. The total cost of this gigantic enterprise was some \$25,000,000, and it was visited by 21,477,212 persons, a number of people which represented nearly one third of the entire population, men, women, and children of the United States. These twenty-one odd million people who visited the Chicago Exposition discovered one stupendous attraction not mentioned in the official guide-books and not built by the United States, by any state in the union, or by any foreign government. It was a huge wooden tabernacle opposite Jackson Park, the site of the exposition, and it was built by the Rev. John Alexander Dowie. It was a plain, commodious structure with the words "Zion Tabernacle" painted on its side in letters sufficiently large to prevent any confusion of identity. Within, instead of an altar, there was an extensive exhibit of crutches and braces hung upon the wall back of the pulpit. This exhibit was always referred to as "captured from the enemy."

The official accounts of the World's Fair describe in great detail the Streets of Cairo, the dress of spun glass for the Infanta Eulalie and Hawaiian volcanoes, but ignore the tabernacle of Dowie. The newspapers, however, did not ignore him. As a staid British contemporary remarks, "he found a potent ally in the American press, a large section of which cares much less for truth than for highly spiced sensation that will help to sell the paper." Dowie, however, did not appreciate this assistance from the "potent

ally." He labeled the Chicago *Dispatch*, the "Dispatch of Hell," declared it was "born in sin, conceived in iniquity and its father is the devil." Joseph Dunlap, editor of the *Dispatch*, he denounced as a "vile and filthy panderer to vice, . . . known to be a wretched scoundrel, so filthy, that God Almighty's earth does not contain a liar more degraded than he." The *Times* persisted in its "vile occupation of lying about me" and as for the *Tribune*, Medill had "the fires of hell lighted in his bosom" and "I told him he was a liar and he knew it." Dowie, however, realizing the power of the printed word, started a paper of his own, *Leaves of Healing*, which described his miraculous healings and printed his powerful sermons. In 1894 he laid hands, he states, on "more than 30,000 persons."

Dowie, at this time, was forty-six, but looked much older. A tall, large-framed man of majestic mien and bearing, wearing a long beard almost white, he instinctively reminded one of the conventional pictures of the patriarch Moses. When he drew himself up to full height and thundered denunciations at his congregations, he seemed to hark back to the angry denunciations Moses hurled at the erring children of Israel. Dowie continued to hurl his invectives at his ancient foes—rum, tobacco, oysters, Freemasons, the Roman Catholic Church and physicians. The following selections from one of his sermons indicates how strongly he felt on these matters:

The majority of men in Chicago, can be smelled several yards off. They stink of nicotine and tobacco and all kinds of medical muck. Ugh! You dirty dogs, who chew your tobacco and puff your smoke. The sun dries it up, that dirty catarrh and cancer of your throats, which you expectorate in the streets . . . and good women and some clean men are forced to breathe your disease-breeding filth. Ugh, you dirty dogs! How can a man be a Christian whose throat is an open sepulchre and whose stomach is a dirty cesspot. . . .

I tell you it is no use, you have your oyster suppers. The good Lord have mercy upon you. Oysters . . . the filthy scavengers of the sea, those dirty oysters that lie there in millions gobbling up all the stink and filth of Philadelphia. . . . Shall I tell you what oysters are for? I will tell you. . . . The actors and actresses, and the filthy people . . . they eat the oysters, and they drink the whiskey together, for the purpose of creating sexual passion—sexual passion! until they are inflamed with the fire of dirty lust. . . .

You filthy pig-eaters. Ugh! You pig-eaters. You have sometimes entertainments in these churches when you roast a sucking pig, and what is it? Fed with the muck and the dirt of the farm, it is the creator of scrofula. . . . The Methodist Church is full of pig and oysters and full of the devil. . . .

Doctors, as a profession, are directly inspired by the devil. Do you know of any demoralization greater than taking the young man, fresh from school, fresh from his mother's side, pure and virtuous and putting him in a dissecting room. . . . They hear the filthy and unclean remarks which are made as they stand over the dead bodies and handle the sacred secrecies of humanity and laugh with diabolical glee over the consequences

of a poor woman's fall or a degraded youth's syphilitic body. . . .

Rome never changes. She boasts *semper idem*, always the same. Yes, she is the same old papal harlot and beast that shed the blood of my fathers in Scotland, and would shed mine tomorrow, if she could. Rome is the same old harlot, drunk with the wine of her own filthy fornications. . . . Rome is corrupt through and through. Her priests, and her nuns, and her policy, and blasphemous lie, and every part of her.

After expressing his opinions on tobacco, oysters, doctors, and the Catholic Church, Dowie now became more personal in his remarks, referring to two prominent clergymen of Chicago, Dr. Gray, a Presbyterian, and Dr. Henson, a Baptist.

Dr. Gray is one of the dirtiest spewing buzzards of this town. He uses tobacco and his mouth is a tobacco churn all the day long. . . . He is a dirty stinkpot. . . . He spends many of his Sabbaths riding the bicycle. . . . It was not long since, in the dusk of the evening, he was brought home with a wrecked bicycle, riding in an express wagon, with his legs dangling out at the end. This deponent can not say whether he was drunk or sober. . . . He is just a stinkpot, and hates to have that word thrown at him. . . .

Dr. P. S. Henson utters his nasty words that he knows are lies, when he says that I am a faith healing fakir. He lies. He knows he lies. He knows it. The youngest son of the oldest member of his church was healed not long ago of appendicitis, and he knows it; and one of the most prominent members of his church was healed of cancer and he knows it. He is a liar all through and through. A bad man, Dr. Henson, a very bad man. . . .



I call him worse than a thief, a highway robber and I say that he is a scoundrel of the deepest dye. I call upon Dr. Henson to repent: and if he does not repent, I shall call upon God to remove him from the world.

After these shafts at the Presbyterians and Baptists, Dowie, as if to show his impartiality, took up the Methodists:

The Methodist Episcopal Church is dying. Instead of Bishop Hurst and Dr. Hoss telling these infernal lies, was it not for them, if they were men of God, to call the Methodist Episcopal Church to humiliation and to prayer before God? That Dr. Hoss is a lying old "hoss" (laughter).

These brief extracts from his sermons may explain how Dowie packed his tabernacle with people. They got something here that even the World's Fair did not give them. But many who went for a thrill remained to pray and become converts to the cause. Resonant oratory and claims of divine powers backed up by spectacular healing were irresistible.

After the World's Fair had closed Dowie rented the Central Music Hall. It proved inadequate to hold the crowds and he moved to the Auditorium. Crowds swarmed to his meetings and money poured in. The sick came in such numbers that Dowie leased three hotels to take care of them. It is significant that Dowie made no charge for healing, the only expense being the hotel bills. These, however, as one observer remarked, were more than adequate.

As was inevitable, a number of deaths occurred

in these hotels among Dowie's patients. The city authorities were aroused, and more than one hundred charges were filed against him, charging manslaughter, neglect, and practising medicine without a permit, as required by the city ordinance. The higher courts, however, held this ordinance unconstitutional, and Dowie was released the victor. More than twenty thousand dollars in lawyer's fees was spent, but Dowie reasoned that the advertising received was worth many times that amount.

After three tumultuous years in Chicago, Dowie acquired a tract of land covering some five thousand acres on the shores of Lake Michigan. Here he founded Zion City, the headquarters of his new organization, which he called the "Christian Catholic Apostolic Church of Zion." Dowie created himself its "First Apostle." The land, which we are told cost some \$1,250,000, he divided into lots which he sold his followers for approximately \$15,000,000, a transaction which is still the envy of the real-estate fraternity. Members of the new church were received by triple immersion and forbidden the use of alcohol, tobacco, pork, oysters, and medicine in any form. Each member was compelled to pay one-tenth of his income to the church, and in his deed to the land was the stipulation that his premises should never be used for a drug-store or as an office or residence of a physician or surgeon.

In Zion City, Dowie established the Zion Bank, the Zion Land and Investment Company, Zion Col-

lege, the Zion Publishing House and the Home of Hope for erring women. The Zion Publishing House published his much discussed *Leaves of Healing*, in which his remarkable cures were described. The following extracts are typical letters from grateful disciples:

My eyesight was failing me, and it was with difficulty that I could see with glasses. I believe as Dr. Dowie teaches. I have had faith, and I see today as well as ever I did in my life. . . .

My daughter was seized with puerperal convulsions and had nine during that day. Medicine was given by order of a consultation of doctors, yet the patient grew rapidly worse, became unconscious. . . . Mr. Dowie came quickly and prayed for my child laying on his hands where the pain was located. Immediately the consciousness returned, the pains ceased, and there were no more convulsions. In twenty minutes from the time he prayed she stood on her feet feeling quite well. . . .

My little girl fell and knocked a tooth out of her jaw. I was going to pull the tooth off but she said, "Oh, mamma, don't pull that off. Put it back and the Lord will heal it." I put it back and said, "Dear Lord, grant the child's wish for Jesus' sake, Amen." The next day she ate candy and popcorn balls on that tooth, and the tooth stayed in for a year.

Three years were consumed in the building of the great tabernacle at Zion City. It seated some seven thousand persons and was decorated with crutches and surgical appliances healed sufferers had thrown away, reminiscent of the votive offerings of the ancient Greeks. Two months before the dedica-

tion of the tabernacle, Dowie made an important announcement:

Elijah's first manifestation was that of Prophet in the reign of Ahab, King of Israel. His second manifestation was also that of Priest, as John the Baptist was. But of Elijah's final manifestation the Scriptures said, . . . Elijah must take the form of Prophet, Priest and Ruler of Men. I say it fearlessly, that by the Grace of God I am and shall be that.

Thus John Alexander Dowie became Elijah the Third. The reincarnation idea soon became contagious. There were three competitors for the rôle of St. Peter, and one illiterate deacon announced that he was the Prophet Isaiah returned to earth. The most startling sequel of all occurred when Evangelist Woodsell became engaged to Deaconess Clauster, announcing that he was the reincarnation of St. Paul, that she was the Virgin Mary returned to earth, and that she would presently bear the Messiah!

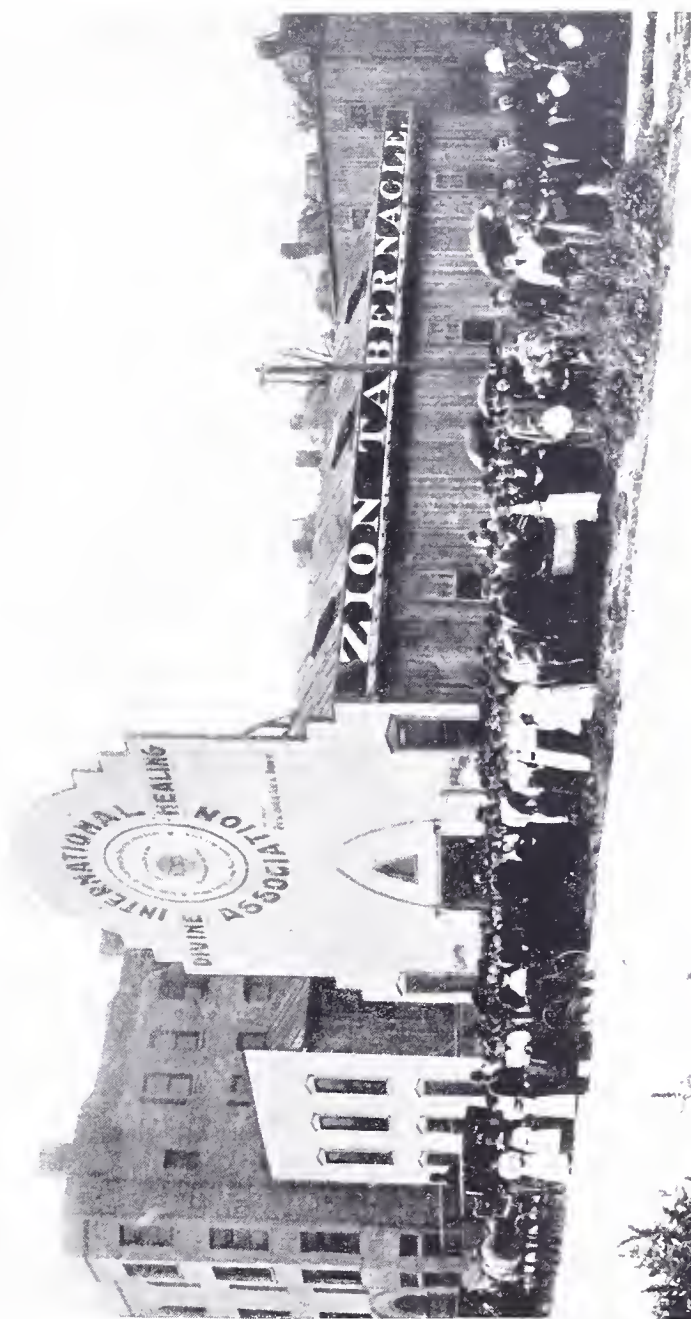
Dowie, although an evangelist of the rough and ready type, conducted religious services with great pomp and elaborate ritual. A white-robed choir of three hundred marched in his processional while Dowie himself wore vestments in which he resembled a mixture of a Greek patriarch and an Anglican bishop. Written petitions from the sick poured in in such numbers that to expedite their delivery, Dowie devised a prayer-wheel like that of the Tibetan monks.

At first, Dowie's undertaking prospered. He founded a lace factory, a candy factory, a soap factory, and a bakery. His income soon assumed staggering proportions. Presently, he established branches in distant parts of the world. He continued to heal the sick and to publish his cures in *Leaves of Healing*. Clergymen of various denominations denounced him heatedly by mouth and by pen. For some of these he devised an unusual answer. After declaring that the Devil was a Methodist, Dowie on Christmas Day, 1903, called the overseers or bishops of the Church together to consider the case of two prominent New York Methodists who had attacked him. After due deliberation, Dowie published the following remarkable edict:

In the name of the Most High God, I deliver James M. Buckley and Stephen Merritt unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh. . . . Let Satan have them and their bodies be destroyed if they do not repent and their spirits be saved on the Day of the Lord Jesus. For His Sake Amen.

Presently, however, the tide, which for years had been running with Dowie, began to run against him. Two events were catastrophic. Dowie, with a large following, including his famous choir, descended upon New York to convert that wicked city. But the people of New York were a hard-necked and perverse generation. They hooted him and jeered him, and on numerous occasions would have mobbed him but for the intervention of the police. At first, the





*Zion Tabernacle, 1893*





newspapers played him up, to his intense delight, but presently they grew tired of him and turned to sports and the Russo-Japanese War. About this time, too, his only daughter was severely burned and died. His sorrow was tinged with bitterness, for the news leaked out that he had summoned a surgeon to treat her burns. Dowie tried to explain the affair as a punishment for her sins, since she had been burned by an alcohol lamp, all his followers being forbidden the use of alcohol for any purpose. But his explanation was not altogether convincing.

By 1905, the industries of Zion City were tottering and the Zion City Bank was on the verge of failure. Dowie summoned from Australia one of his disciples, Wilbur Glenn Voliva, and, placing him in charge, departed for Monterey, Mexico, to enjoy a hard-earned vacation. While in Monterey, he received a telegram from Voliva announcing that he had been deposed as First Apostle for immorality and polygamy. He was later allowed to return to Zion City, but was broken in health and showed unmistakable signs of mental illness. He died insane in 1907.

After Dowie's death, investigation revealed that the First Apostle had not only diverted some \$2,500,000 to his own use but had, like the unforgettable Brigham Young, tried to introduce polygamy and, indeed, had already started a harem for the First Apostle.

Zion City is now ruled by Wilbur Glenn Voliva, a native of Indiana, and at one time, overseer of the

church in Australia. According to accounts, he teaches that the world is flat, that the sun is less than fifty miles distant, and that the force of gravity is a myth. Dowie's name is no longer mentioned in Zion, and even his old disciples refuse to discuss him.

It has often been said that no man can transmit his experience and wisdom to his son, but that each must learn for himself. So, too, must each generation labor at and learn many lessons already mastered by the previous generation.

If we reckon a generation as thirty years, a generation elapsed after Dowie's phenomenal success in Chicago before strange stories began to circulate about the miracle worker of Gallsbach, a small town in Austria. Although only a village, Gallsbach had in the year 1929, 95,535 visitors, all drawn thither by Herr Valentin Zeileis, the modern miracle-worker. In the same year 50,000 people, unable to obtain lodgings in the little village, were quartered in the neighboring hamlets, from which they came to Gallsbach to be healed.

In every house, in the taverns, on the street, the only topic of conversation was Zeileis. He was said to have been born in either India or Persia, to have been educated in an Indian cloister, to have been early in life initiated into the mysteries of the Yogi and to be now an old man—here the figures varied from 78 to 1,100 years. As a matter of fact, he came from Vienna, was formerly a locksmith, and in 1929 was fifty-six years old.

It is frequently assumed that when a miracle-worker appears, only the poor and lowly follow him. This can be readily disproved in every instance. Mesmer, as we have previously seen, had an enthusiastic disciple in Lafayette, and Elisha Perkins received a testimonial letter for his metallic tractors from George Washington. The waiting-rooms of Zeileis were filled with noblemen, bank directors, railway executives, privy counselors, clergymen, and even an occasional American millionaire. General Mannerheim, the hero of Finland, was healed by Zeileis, and Prof. von Wendt, the professor of physiology at Helsingfors came to Zeileis, was healed, and then devoted himself to a scientific study of the remarkable methods of the healer. Dr. Erwin Liek, the well-known German physician and writer, visited Gallspach in 1929 and has written a most interesting account of his experiences.

Zeileis' clinic was housed in an old twelfth-century castle, dominated by two round towers and surrounded by a typical moat. A stream of people climbed the hill and slowly made their way across the drawbridge and into the courtyard. Inside the courtyard, hanging from the wall, was a large sign reading:

I call to the attention of the visitors to my laboratory, that I am neither a graduated doctor nor a professor, but endeavor only on the basis of my knowledge to help my fellow men.

Gallspach, March 13, 1924

VALENTIN ZEILEIS

The patients in Zeileis' "laboratory" were seen and treated from seven in the morning until one in the afternoon and again, after an hour's intermission, from two until five. In eight hours approximately three thousand patients were treated! The numbers were enormous and make even the figures claimed by Dowie pale by comparison.

The patients, some one hundred at a time, were seen in a large room, which, in the days of the castle's glory, had served as a cow-stall. Zeileis, in his shirt-sleeves, the neck of his collar open, and smoking a long black cheroot, strode into the darkened room carrying in his right hand a wand, with an electric bulb on the end, and connected with a high frequency apparatus. A bluish, sparkling light radiated from the bulb into the obscurity of the room. This light was flashed upon the patient while an assistant placed a glass tube filled with gas upon various parts of the body. The diagnosis depended upon the different appearance of the tube when placed upon diseased or healthy organs. Treatment was carried out with the same dispatch. The wand with the electric bulb was held for a few moments over the diseased organ. The whole affair was a matter of minutes. It could not have lasted longer, if we remember that Zeileis treated about three thousand patients in eight hours!

Zeileis' bookkeeping was as simple as his methods of healing. Each patient before entering the labora-

tory bought a card of admission for three schillings. Zeileis personally took up the cards as the patient entered. Three schillings, no more, no less. The bank president paid three schillings, the peasant maid of all work paid three schillings. An American millionaire once offered Zeileis a blank check for a personal diagnosis and treatment—Zeileis refused.

Zeileis never explained his treatments or their method of action to his patients, as do so many modern physicians. One lady, more persistent than others, asked the healer how his treatments healed. He answered gruffly, in his quaint Viennese dialect, "Go to the devil and leave me in peace."

Valentin Zeileis was never impressed by the social standing or bank accounts of his patients. He addressed them all with the familiar form "*du*," whether they were noble ladies or scrubwomen, Geheimrats or stable boys. This conduct, according to some, had a great psychological effect and proved that, to him, they were merely fellowmen whom he wished to help, just as was written on his sign.

Zeileis' activities caused great excitement even in Teutonic lands where the inhabitants are supposed to have more than the normal amount of phlegm. Newspapers were filled with accounts of his remarkable cures, how he had cured tuberculosis, infantile paralysis, apoplexy, gout, blindness, deafness and cancer.

One of the leading physicians wrote under his



signature in the *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten*: "Zeileis is a man with a pure heart and pure hands, a true friend of the patients, and an indefatigable helper of the poor."

The Vienna faculty, however, refused to be impressed. They described his treatments as "hocus-pocus," "mystic rays," "hair-raising ignorance," "the worst kind of quackery," "mass insanity," and "preying on human stupidity."

Many demanded that the authorities step in and drive out this notorious swindler. The authorities did nothing. They dared not. The people at large would, perhaps, have caused some disturbance, and there was already too much unrest in Austria. Also the innkeepers and shopkeepers in Gallspach would have lost too much money if Zeileis' patients came no more.

Dr. Liek studied the healer of Gallspach with great interest and with an open mind. He saw many patients who had been healed and many who had not. He concluded that

... the undeniable effect of Zeileis' treatment is a "shock to the system." The point of attack, however, is not the sick body, but the sick soul. That, alone, explains how all diseases, from headache and blindness to a gouty toe are healed or improved by the same treatment. Many physicians do not yet know that not only "nervous," but organic disease can be profoundly influenced by psychic methods.\*

\* *Das Wunder in der Heilkunde* (1936).

Six years later Gallspach was again a quiet Austrian hamlet. The stream of patients had dried up. The hotels were empty and under the auctioneer's hammer Zeileis' "laboratory" was closed.

The reasons were, perhaps, many. The chief reason, according to Liek, was that the son of Zeileis studied medicine in the regular way and graduated. Young Zeileis with Professor von Wendt attempted to put the treatment on a scientific basis, but the more they studied the method of Zeileis and the more they tried to make it scientific, the fewer they healed. Presently, none were healed. The magic wand of the healer had lost its magic in other hands. Magic and science were not congenial colleagues.

Zeileis had his cures—there can be no doubt of that. Dowie, also, had his cures—again the evidence is too strong to doubt. It is noteworthy, however, that while Dowie's healing was part of the foundation of a new church, the pillar of a new religion, Zeileis' methods had nothing of the religious, or of the supernatural in them. He healed with the mystery of electric sparks. Quimby was unquestionably sincere, while we may well doubt the sincerity of Dowie and of Zeileis. All three, however, inspired faith in their patients—the faith that heals.

## *Chapter XI*

### THOU SHALT NOT SUFFER A WITCH TO LIVE

THE subject of witchcraft troubled our ancestors a great deal more than it troubles the present generation. The literature on witchcraft is enormous, so that it is a difficult task to unravel the tangled skein and to follow the thread of a story which begins with the dawn of history and extends down to the modern era. Witchcraft has profoundly influenced mythology, literature, law, theology, and science. In literature, some of our most powerful dramas and most engrossing stories are woven about witches and their diabolical deeds. In the realm of law, it is noteworthy that every state having a code of laws, has at some time passed stringent laws against the practice of witchcraft and has decreed death as a punishment for the transgressors. The Church throughout the centuries has not only exceeded the state in the severity of its decrees but has, until comparatively recent times, made the disbelief in witches a crime almost as heinous as the practice

of witchcraft itself. In science, many of the unexplained phenomena observed by men have been ascribed to enchantment and to the charms of witches.

In more recent times, witchcraft has come to belong more properly to the field of pathology and medicine than to the domain of law and theology. It has, however, taken the human race more than three thousand years to appreciate this point of view. The history of witchcraft is an absorbing story of adventure, mystery, and tragedy, through which stalk the figures of heroes and villains. It would, indeed, shock our ancestors to realize that to-day we look back on most of the witches not as villains, but as martyrs.

About one thousand years before the birth of Christ, the King of the Hebrews, when troubled and afraid, turned to the Lord, but the Lord answered him not: "Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go up to her, and enquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor."

The story of the Witch of Endor is well known; the witch brought up from the earth the dead prophet Samuel who told the terrified Saul that "to-morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me." The conversation between the King and the witch before the apparition appeared is no less interesting. "The woman said unto him, Behold thou knowest what Saul hath done, how he hath cut off those that have

familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land: wherefore then layest thou a snare for my life, to cause me to die." This is clear proof that up to that time Saul had endeavored to obey the injunction of Moses, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live."

The early distinction between prophets and witches, or sorcerers, is not quite clear. Divination, or foretelling the future, one of the commonest forms of witchcraft, when performed in the name of the established deity was prophecy; when performed by a follower of a pagan god, it was witchcraft. Aaron, as related in *Exodus*, cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and it became a serpent. Pharaoh's sorcerers cast their rods and they also became serpents, but "Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods." Aaron here is a prophet, the Egyptians sorcerers.

As the Hebrews journeyed from Egypt to the promised land, they encountered many strange and false religions. To overthrow these pagan cults, it was necessary to destroy priests and priestesses, who, since they were the servants of false gods, were classed as witches. However, in Palestine at the time of Saul, there were still many people who carried on the old pagan rites and occult practices in spite of the king's efforts to stamp them out. When the unhappy king was deserted by his own counselors and prophets, he resorted to one of the old heathen priestesses, the Witch of Endor.

Frequent mention is made of witches or sorcerers





*Walpurgis Night*

[From an old print]





by ancient Greeks and Romans, but these witches, unlike those of Christian times, were often women of great beauty and charm, such as Circe and Canidia. One such witch, Pamphilé, was much loved by one Lucius, who bribed her maid to smuggle him into her chamber at night. Here the astounded Lucius saw the lady anoint herself with a magical ointment, suddenly grow wings and feathers, change into an owl and fly out of the window. Lucius was determined to carry out the experiment upon himself, and persuaded the maid to bring him some ointment. The maid, confused, brought a different jar and the poor Lucius, after anointing himself, was transformed into an ass. His later adventures are described in the famous *Golden Ass* of Apuleius.

In the ancient pagan religions, a witch was simply a sorcerer and not a servant of Satan, who was then unknown. After the discovery of Satan by Judaism and later by Christianity, the term *witch* acquired a different significance. To the Greeks and Romans, a witch was merely one who practised magic, the term having no evil significance. To the Christians, a witch was a servant of the Devil and as such, could not be beautiful as the pagan witches had been, but was invariably an old, bent, shriveled, ugly hag.

For centuries after the birth of Christ, although witchcraft was a capital crime, there were few executions for this crime because of difficulty in deciding who were witches and who were not. Thus, Joan of Arc was called a witch by the English, a saint by

the French: the English believing the voices she heard to be the voice of the Devil, the French that they were from God. This controversy was not finally settled until the twentieth century when she was canonized by Pope Benedict XV. In the fifteenth century, not long after the execution of Joan, the whole subject of witchcraft began to take a more definite form.

In the year 1484, Pope Innocent VII issued his famous bull, *Summis desiderantes affectibus*, which, according to some historians, marks the beginning of the witch crusade. This "Witch Bull," is a relatively brief, but emphatic document. It states:

It has indeed lately come to Our ears not without afflicting Us with bitter sorrow, that in some parts of Northern Germany . . . many persons of both sexes, unmindful of their own salvation and straying from the Catholic Faith, have abandoned themselves to devils, incubi and cuccubi, and by their incantations, spells, conjurations and other accursed charms and crafts, enormities and horrid offenses, have slain infants yet in the mother's womb, also the offspring of cattle, have blasted the produce of the earth, the grapes of the vine, the fruits of the trees, nay, men and women, beasts of burthen.

To combat these practices, the Pope states that

Our dear sons Henry Kraemer and James Sprenger, Professors of Theology, of the Order of Friars Preachers, have been by Letters Apostolic delegated as Inquisitors of these heretical pravities.

The bull closes with the thundering declaration that no one should question its authority:

But if any dare to do so, which God forbid, let him know that upon him will fall the wrath of Almighty God and of the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul.

Pope Innocent VIII, who issued this bull, has been assailed by some historians as a corrupt, lustful, and ferocious fanatic. While it is true that earlier in his career he had a love affair with a Neapolitan lady by whom he had two children, this was not exactly a scandal in those days. Later he attempted to make amends for his earlier indiscretions by marrying his son to a daughter of Lorenzo de Medici and his daughter to a son of Gherardo Uso de' Mare, the Papal treasurer and one of the wealthiest men in Italy. The Rev. Montague Summers, who has studied his life with especial care, describes him as "a great and truly Christian, if not wholly blameless, successor of St. Peter" and adds, "In spite of these few faults, Innocent VIII was a Pontiff who, at a most difficult time, worthily filled his Apostolic dignity."

Certain Catholic historians object to this designation of "Witch Bull" pointing out that there had been previous bulls upon this subject and that this bull of Innocent VIII only ratified the powers conferred on Henry Kraemer and James Sprenger, inquisitors, to deal with every form of crime, including witchcraft and heresy. There is, however, general

agreement, as expressed by the *Catholic Encyclopedia* that "by specifying the evil practices charged against the witches . . . the Pope must no doubt be considered to affirm the reality of the alleged phenomena."

The newly appointed inquisitors, Kraemer and Sprenger, realized at once that before witches could be apprehended, it was necessary to identify them. To aid those not versed in witchcraft, they prepared a hand-book, *Malleus Maleficarum* (*Witches' Hammer*), which certainly deserves the title of epochal, since it inaugurated an epoch in the history of human suffering.

The *Witches' Hammer* first appeared in 1484 and, as a preface, printed the bull of "Innocent Bishop, servant of the servants of God." Its full title is *Hammer of Witches, Collected from very Many Authors*. Among the imposing list of authors quoted, we note the names of St. John Chrysostom, St. Hilarius, St. Augustine, Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, St. Bernard and the Rabbi Maimonides. The book is a long treatise on the actions of demons, how to distinguish the voices of demons from those of angels, how to recognize witches, how to make them confess, how to exorcise or cast out demons, and sundry similar topics. The edition I have before me was printed in 1584 and consists of 540 pages of small type, packed with information concerning demons and their servants, the witches. In it, we learn that witches slay and

devour children, cause hail, lightning, thunderstorms, and tempests, make horses kick, foretell the future and raise up the dead.

The most common method employed by witches to cause tempests is related in the story of a witch detained in the Castle of Königsheim, near Schlettstadt. This witch had refused, even after torture, to confess her crimes, when one of the household came into her cell and promised to free her if she would show him how she raised a hailstorm:

When at length she agreed to show him how to raise a hailstorm, and a bowl of water had been brought in, the witch told him to stir the water a little with his finger, and herself uttered certain words; and suddenly the place where he had named, a wood near the castle, was visited by such a tempest and storm of hail as had not been seen for many years.

The *Witches' Hammer* describes in great detail the method of procedure to be followed in trying witches. It states that "a prudent and zealous Judge," if he wishes to determine whether the suspected woman is a witch, should "take note whether she is able to shed tears when standing in his presence, or when being tortured," for "if she be a witch, she will not be able to weep: although she will assume a tearful aspect and smear her cheeks and eyes with spittle to make it appear she is weeping; wherefore she must be closely watched by the attendants."

Until this remarkable book was published, men may have had doubts as to what witches were. After



its appearance, there could no longer be any uncertainty, since they now had an authoritative description of them and of their crimes. The year after the appearance of the book, one inquisitor alone burned forty-five witches, while a colleague in Piedmont executed one hundred. About the same time a tempest raged near Constance for which two old women were held responsible and promptly burned. In 1515, five hundred people were executed at Geneva as "Protestant witches"; in Como, in 1524, more than a thousand witches were executed in one year. In 1595, Nicolas Remy published his famous *Demonolatry*, a book compiled from his experiences with the trials of nine hundred persons executed in Lorraine for the crime of witchcraft.

With the advent of the Reformation, heretics were regarded as witches and many of the so-called witch hunts were really heresy hunts. The triumph of the Reformation in certain parts of Europe did not, however, halt the witch hunt. Martin Luther made his attitude perfectly clear when he said, "I have no compassion for witches, I would burn them all," and John Calvin was no less uncompromising in his attitude toward witchcraft. One interesting difference developed, however; Catholics regarded heretics as a variety of witch, while many Protestants were convinced that the Catholic Church rites were an abominable form of witchcraft. To the Catholic, heresy was witchcraft, and to the Protestant, witchcraft was a "Papish practice." On the interesting title



*The Pope Descends into Hell*



page of his book *Wider das Bapstum zu Rom vom Teuffel gestift* (*Against the papacy at Rome, founded by the Devil*), Martin Luther presents what we might call the authoritative Lutheran viewpoint. Here we see the Pope sitting on his throne, surrounded by imps, demons, and witches while below him flames shoot out from the mouth of Hell which is yawning wide to receive him.

Kraemer and Sprenger in their *Witches' Hammer* have an interesting chapter on "Why Superstition is Chiefly found in Women." After describing the numerous defects in women, they finally advance two clinching arguments. "There was a defect," they write, "in the formation of the first woman, since she was formed from a bent rib, that is, a rib of the breast, which is bent as it were, in a contrary direction to a man. And since, through this defect, she is an imperfect animal, she always deceives." They add that even the word for woman, *femina*, is derived from *fe*, faith, and *minus*, less, because women have less faith than men and are consequently more easily led astray by the temptations of the Devil. Indeed, most of the witches who suffered for their crimes were women, one famous exception being the notorious Dr. Faust.

This man, though well known throughout Germany, remained somewhat of a local celebrity, until Goethe in his tragedy, *Faust*, made him a world figure. According to Goethe, he was a learned old man, who, despairing at the futility of science, made a

pact with the Devil, became young again and after various adventures, tasted the joys of youth, and was finally carried off by the Devil. One of the most interesting of these adventures took place in Auerbach's Keller, or wine-cellar, in Leipsic, where the Devil bored a hole in the table from which various wines flowed and then, being attacked by the students, mounted a cask with his companion Faust and rode out of the cellar. The Devil and Faust also visited, on one occasion, a witch's kitchen where the doctor saw the witches brew their hellish concoctions and later, on Walpurgis night, they attended the witches gathering on the Brocken, a mountain in the Harz and saw the witches riding in on brooms, bocks, and swine to attend the hellish festivities in honor of the Devil. These festivities, or the Witches Sabbath, have been described in all authoritative books on witchcraft and are well illustrated in a famous book on witches by Praetorius.

Most of Faust's contemporaries did not consider him a magician, but a mountebank, who lived in Wittenberg and wandered over the country with a performing horse and dog—one of those "wicked, cheating, useless and unlearned doctors." Martin Luther, however, feared his fellow townsman and said once that with God's help, he had been able to thwart Dr. Faust and his sorcery. Not long after his death, a prominent pastor in Basle declared that Faust, who mystified the people with his tricks, was really a conjurer, in league with the Devil, and that





*Dr. Faust*  
[From an old woodcut]





the performing horse and dog were really evil spirits, and that Faust was finally carried off by the Devil. Melancthon, the great reformer, said that Dr. Faust was killed by the Devil who wrung his neck. Whatever his final fate, it is noteworthy and speaks much for his cleverness, that he escaped execution as a witch.

King James of England is held in grateful memory by posterity for two achievements: he united the crowns of Scotland and England, and he was responsible for the King James version of the Bible which still holds its own, despite later versions, translations, and innovations. The King's part in this version was a modest one, since he merely summoned the convocation of the clergy which appointed a commission to make a satisfactory translation of the Bible. The King, whose book learning combined with an unusual inaptitude for statecraft had earned for him the title of the "wisest fool in Christendom," had talents and tastes in a different field. He was not, however, without a certain flair for literature, and is unique among English kings as the author of a book of sonnets, several tragedies, and a number of prose works. One of his books on theological subjects was translated into French and a copy presented to the Pope. The translator, in his preface, acknowledges certain omissions and says that certain phrases like "papistical doctrine" were deleted, because of the impossibility of translating them into a foreign tongue. The Pope, however, became sus-

picious, had a translation of the original edition made, and immediately placed the book on the Index of Prohibited Books. King James is best remembered as an author for his books, *Counterblaste to Tobacco* and *Dæmonologie in Form of ane Dialogue*—the former as futile in its effect as the latter was prodigious. The book *Dæmonologie* became for England what the *Witches' Hammer* was for the Continent. It is interesting to trace the experiences of King James with witchcraft that led to the composition of his masterpiece on witches.

King James, only child of the unfortunate Mary Queen of Scots, had been brought up in turbulent Scotland and had spent most of his early life checking the intrigues of his plotting nobles and foiling the schemes of the Devil. He was from early youth, an honest, sincere, and zealous believer in witchcraft. In 1589, James was married by proxy to Princess Anne of Denmark, who soon after sailed for England to meet her husband. A severe storm arose which drove the ship back to the coast of Norway and the Princess decided to postpone the trip to England. The King, anxious to see his bride, decided to sail for Denmark, but again a fierce storm arose. After a terrifying voyage, the King finally landed in safety at Upsala. A series of storms followed and the King delayed his passage home, remaining all winter on the Continent. In the spring, he and his bride sailed for England, when again a fierce storm overtook them. A dense fog almost sent their ship

on the rocks. The King was certain he had been bewitched and as soon as he had landed, directed that a search be made for the guilty witch. They soon found the culprit, one Dr. Fian of Saltpans who, as has been remarked, was the Scottish Dr. Faust. He was said to have been a dissolute youth who early made a pact with the Devil and through his sorcery acquired quite a following of Catholic women and simple peasants. This group of people, according to the story, hated the King, because he was pious and a Protestant and, under the leadership of Dr. Fian, caused the storms which almost wrecked the ship and drowned the King.

Dr. Fian, alias John Cunningham, was already suspected of being a sorcerer. Several years before he had become enamored of a fair young lady. When she refused his advances, he resorted to witchcraft. He persuaded her brother, one of his pupils, to secure some of her hair. The young lady's mother hearing of the scheme, however, substituted some hair from a young heifer. The school-master received the hair, and, to quote the record, "thinking them indeed to be the maids haires, went straight and wrought his arte upon them." Presently the heifer, from whom the hairs were taken, came to the door of the church where the school-master happened to be, walked in, and made toward him, leaping and dancing upon him, and followed him out of the church, and, the historian writes, "to what place soever he went; to the great admiration of all the

townes men of Saltpans, and many others who did beholde the same. The report whereof made all men imagine he did worke it by the Devill."

Dr. Fian was promptly arrested, charged with holding an assembly of witches at the old Berwick Church where, by incantations and other hellish devices, they had produced a storm and attempted to drown the King. He denied the accusation even under torture. Finally he was "put to the most severe and cruel pain in the world, called the bootes," when he broke down and confessed that he had tried to drown the King at sea by producing the storms. As soon as Dr. Fian had recovered from the pain of the torture, he denied the whole story, said it was nonsense and that he had confessed only to spare himself further torture. King James, hearing that Dr. Fian had repudiated his confession, examined him personally, and finding him stubborn in his refusal to confess, ordered him tortured again. The unfortunate Dr. Fian now had his fingernails pulled out with pincers and "other tortures too terrible to narrate" but refused this time to confess. Nevertheless, he and several women were burned as witches on Castle Hill.

King James pondered long over this affair and over several others which came to his notice. He was much interested in the case of a noble lady, who at childbirth had called in an old woman to ease the pains. The old woman gave the lady a potion which stilled her pains. The news of this singular



*Dr. Fian's Sabbat*

[From Montague Summers, *A Popular History of Witchcraft*, E. P. Dutton, 1937]





event aroused the ire of pious Scotchmen who saw in it an impious and blasphemous deed, since it was clearly written in the *Book of Genesis* that the Lord God said to Eve "in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children." The old woman who could still the pains of childbirth must be both a witch and a blasphemer. She was brought to trial, found guilty, and burned at the stake. The King studied many other cases and assembled a vast amount of information about witches.

Seven years after the execution of Dr. Fian, King James published his book, *Dæmonologie*, which students at a safe distance declared was much inferior to other treatises on witchcraft, and merely a compilation from the Continental literature. Nevertheless, it had a profound effect upon its generation. The King was interested in witches and demanded their extermination. To prosecute witches was to win royal favor. In this little book of eighty-one pages he mentions two infallible tests for witches—the presence of "witch-marks" on the body and the water test. The characteristic of witch-marks was that they were insensitive to pin-pricks, a discovery which gave birth to a new profession in England, "prickers," or men who went around pricking suspected witches to see if they had any insensitive spots on their bodies. Every doctor to-day knows that the presence of areas on the body, insensitive to pain, is a characteristic finding in hysteria. The water-test was simple, since pure water refused to

receive those who had renounced their baptism. Suspected witches were thrown into water: if they sank, they were innocent; if they floated, they were guilty. As one writer somewhat caustically observes, this was a convenient way of disposing of one's enemies. If they sank they probably drowned; if they floated, they were hanged.

In general, *Dæmonologie* followed conventional lines. Witches, according to King James, made waxen images of people they wished to harm and by heating these figures caused the person whose names they bore to be melted away by illness and finally to perish. Witches could not shed tears, although most women shed them as readily as crocodiles. He denied that all witches were morose and solitary hags, and states flatly that some of them were rich and worldly wise, some of them fat or corpulent in their bodies. It is interesting that James, staunch Protestant though he was, admitted the occasional efficacy of the exorcisms of the Roman Church. The papists, he maintained, could often effect cures because "the Divell is content to release the bodelie hurting of them for a shorte space thereby to obteine the perpetual hurt of the soules."

King James says his book was written to contradict the

damnable opinions of two, principally in our age Scot an Englishman who is not ashamed in publike print to deny, that there can be such a thing as Witch-craft [and] Wierus a German phisition [who] sets out a publick apol-

ogie for al these craftes-folkes, whereby . . . he plainly bewrayes himselfe to have bene one of that profession.

A word regarding these two gentlemen may not be amiss. Reginald Scot was a man of education, culture, and wealth. After taking his degree at Oxford, he retired to his estate and spent his leisure hours in study. He was familiar with several cases of supposed witchcraft which turned out to be humbugs, one girl being a ventriloquist accused of being bewitched and two other girls who vomited straw and pins—which they had previously swallowed—also thought to be bewitched. He studied many cases, read deeply in the literature and became convinced that there were no real witches with power conferred upon them by the Devil. After much study and reflection, he wrote a book, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, which was published in 1584 and remains a classic on the subject.

In this remarkable book, Scot says that miracles have ceased, that the gift of prophecy has ceased, and that oracles have ceased. He speaks of the famous Witch of Endor as a cheat, explains “that neither the divell nor Samuell was raised” and that “Speaking as it were from the bottome of hir bellie, did cast hir selfe into a transe, and so abused *Saule*, answering to *Saule* in *Samuels* name, in hir counterfeited voice . . . and this is right *Ventriloquie*.” The woman of Endor was not a witch but a ventriloquist. At the close of his work, Scot discusses the famous

*Witches' Hammer*, which he says "conteinith nothing but stinking lies and poperie."

Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft* displeased King James exceedingly. He ordered it burned by the common hangman and all possible copies destroyed. To-day it is rated by collectors as a rare book.

Johann Wierus, or Wier, was a German physician of Dutch extraction, who wrote a book in Latin on demons, in which he criticized harshly the witch persecutions and expounded the view that witches were afflicted persons and should be treated humanely, as one treats the sick. He was even more careful than Scot not to deny the existence of witches, probably because the *Witches' Hammer* was regarded in his part of the world as a semi-sacred book.

King James induced parliament to pass severe laws against witchcraft, and the witch hunt was on. It is noteworthy that, for all his zeal, only forty or fifty witches were executed during his reign. The best known case during his reign was that of the Lancashire witches, probably the most famous case in the history of English witchcraft. This case was a most complicated one and had its basis in a feud between two rival mountaineer or hill families in Lancashire, both grossly ignorant and superstitious and both claiming skill in magic. The feud reached such proportions that the countryside became alarmed at the stories of fights waged with incantations, charms, and other supernatural means.



*The Witch Swims*  
[From an old print]





The witches belonging to both clans were arrested, tried and ten sentenced to death.

The episode of the Lancashire witches attracted great attention throughout England and stimulated popular interest in witches. The literary craft responded to this interest and no less than four popular plays with witchcraft as a leitmotiv appeared on the stage. The best known of these, was *The Witch*, by Thomas Middleton, a play whose witch scene bears such a striking resemblance to the witch scene in *Macbeth* that some critics have suggested Shakespeare borrowed heavily from Middleton. A more correct analysis is that both dramatists borrowed heavily from Reginald Scot's book on witchcraft.

As King James grew older, his interest in witchcraft waned. Thomas Fuller, the eminent historian, relates that the King's careful study of the witch trials revealed a mass of forged evidence and fantastic accusations so that he "grew first diffident of, and then flatly denied, the working of witches and devils, as but falsehoods and delusions." We can only wonder if Fuller's statement is correct. It has been ignored by most historians who picture King James going down to his grave still uttering curses and maledictions against witches and witchcraft.

Charles I, the son and successor of King James, did not inherit his father's early interest in witchcraft nor his zeal in prosecuting witches. Part of his lack of interest was probably due to the influence of his physician, Dr. William Harvey, the discoverer

of the circulation of the blood. William Harvey investigated many subjects, among them witchcraft, which was causing so much excitement.

In 1685, a justice of the peace wrote Harvey to ask him if he believed there was such a thing as witchcraft, and the justice relates "Hee told mee he believed there was not." According to the justice, Harvey told the story of a visit he had made to a reputed witch in a lonely house on the heath, telling her that he was a wizard who had come to talk magic with her. The old woman believed him because, as Harvey relates, "you know I have a very magical face," and, when he asked to see her familiar spirit, the old woman placed a saucer of milk upon the floor and clucked. A toad hopped out from under a chest and began drinking the milk.

Harvey then asked the woman to go to an inn, about half a mile distant and fetch some ale. While she was gone, Harvey, an able anatomist, killed the toad and dissected it. He found the milk inside but also saw that it differed in no way from any other toad, and decided that the woman had only tamed it and then concluded it contained the spirit of her familiar. When the old woman returned and saw the tragedy, she "flew like a Tigris" at Harvey, but cooled down when he told her that the King had sent him to discover and arrest witches. Harvey then took his departure, chuckling to himself at the whole affair.

During the reign of Charles I, witches appeared

again in Lancashire. On the testimony of a small boy, one Edmund Robinson, that he had attended a witches' feast and seen boys changed into white horses and into greyhounds, seventeen women were convicted of witchcraft. Four of them were sent to London, where Dr. Harvey examined them at the request of the King, but found no witch-marks upon their bodies. Later, the boy confessed that the whole affair was a hoax, and the women were discharged, much to the disappointment of the London populace, which had looked forward with keen anticipation to the executions.

Although Harvey did not believe in witches, two of his eminent contemporaries did. One of these was the famous Sir Thomas Browne, author of *Religio Medici*, eminent both as a physician and writer, who wrote "for my part, I have ever believed, and do now know, that there are witches." At a trial of two witches during the reign of Charles II, Browne expressed his opinion that the women were witches and his testimony caused their conviction. The other notable was the Hon. Robert Boyle, president of the Royal Society, an eminent chemist and physiologist who, although he never testified at the trial of witches, was a firm believer in witchcraft and assisted his friend, Joseph Glanville, in the preparation of a book on witchcraft.

Joseph Glanville was a member of Exeter College, Oxford, and during the era of Cromwell was a zealous partizan of the Commonwealth. According to

his biographer, "After his Majesty's Restauration, by duly weighing Matters, he became convinced of his mistaken Notions, wrote an elaborate Treatise, called, the Vanity of *Dogmatizing*, for which he was made a Fellow of the *Royal Society*, entered into Holy Orders, according to the Church of *England*" and later became chaplain to Charles II. Glanville, once a zealous Puritan and then a devoted Royalist, wrote a book on witchcraft, a book which changed its name with each edition and finally emerged with the imposing title of *Sadducismus Triumphatus or Unbelief Conquered*. In this book the learned fellow of the Royal Society tried to reconcile science and religion and the astonishing product was a passionate defense of witchcraft.

Glanville asserts that the question of witches "is not a Matter of vain Speculation or of indifferent Moment; but an Inquiry of very great and weighty Importance. For, on the Resolution of it, depends the Authority and just Execution of some of our *Laws*; and which is more, our *Religion*, in its main Doctrines is nearly concerned." He is especially wroth at his opponents and bewails the fact that "*Atheism* and *Infidelity* have advanced in our Days, and how openly they now dare shew themselves, in asserting and disputing their vile Cause." To prove his point he recounts in some two hundred closely printed pages the evil deeds of witches, and says that "Angels are still ministring Spirits as well as of old." He criticizes Reginald Scot repeatedly, defends the

traditional view of the Witch of Endor, and remarks that Scot thinks "a Man may make what he will of all the Histories of the Bible."

Glanville was answered by John Webster, formerly a minister, who later became a physician. Webster's *Displaying of Supposed Witchcraft* was a book which it took courage to write and also to print. The printer and bookseller seem to have had more caution than courage for the title page states "Printed by J. M. and are to be sold by the booksellers in London 1677." Webster himself was not lacking in courage, for the title page states "that there is a Corporeal League made betwixt the Devil and the Witch . . . that Witches are turned into Cats, Dogs, raise Tempests, or the like, is utterly denied and disproved."

Webster's particular interest in witchcraft began one day when a boy of ten or eleven years was brought into the parish church where Webster was preaching. The boy's presence, Webster relates, "moved some little disturbance in the Congregation for a while" and, after prayers, Webster learned that the boy was Edmund Robinson who had recently discovered witches in Lancashire. Webster followed the boy to his lodgings and questioned him about the witches. But "two very unlikely persons that did conduct him and manage the business . . . did pluck him from me" and left the questions unanswered. Their conduct aroused the suspicion of Webster, who was not surprised when the boy later confessed



that he was taught to accuse certain women in Lancashire of witchcraft.

Webster's book contains a list of similar impostors and he concludes by denying that witches perform supernatural feats and that they are only evil-minded creatures. Glanville retorted that "no witches, no spirits, no immortality, no God." This argument carried conviction and nowhere more than in the New World settled by Englishmen who were a bulwark of orthodoxy.

## *Chapter XII*

### WITCHES INVADE THE NEW WORLD

**I**N the year 1692, strange events occurred in the household of the Rev. Parris, minister of the Salem Village Church in Massachusetts. Although a man of maturity, Mr. Parris was just beginning his pastorate at an age when most ministers had already served several churches. A graduate of Harvard, he had not immediately entered the ministry, as had most of his classmates, but had spent several years in the Barbados where he had been engaged in West Indian trade. Apparently, however, his commercial ventures had not been a success, so he decided to fall back on the ministry as a source of living, and was appointed pastor in Salem Village.

On their return from the West Indies, the Parris family brought with them two slaves, John and Tituba, half Negro and half Indian. Contemporary histories are silent in regard to the fate of John. Tituba, however, was the direct cause of the greatest commotion the colony had ever experienced. Indeed, in a sense, she looms as a historical personage.

Salem, which to-day numbers some forty thousand inhabitants, was a small village of less than two thousand in the year 1692. It had been founded by pious, God-fearing Puritans, who named it from the seventy-sixth psalm—"In Judah is God known, His name is great in Israel, in Salem also is His tabernacle." These liberal Puritans had separated not from the Church, but from its corruptions. The first ministers there used the liturgy of the Church of England. Presently, however, as the Puritans grew in influence and numbers and became more strict, it became as uncompromising as the neighboring Boston. These Puritans of Salem, who had fled from their native country to escape religious persecution, now seem to have developed a strange inability to tolerate any worship but their own. Those ministers who used the prayer book of the Church of England were sent back to the mother country on the charge that they endangered the safety of the colony. Roger Williams was banished for preaching that men should have freedom of conscience in religion. Lady Deborah Moody was forced to leave because she expressed a doubt about the necessity for infant baptism. Soon after Mr. Parris came to Salem, a number of Quaker women were stripped, tied to carts and dragged, half naked, through the streets, for no crime other than that they would not abandon their peculiar religious beliefs.

As the years went by, religious intolerance increased rather than diminished. The people of

Salem in 1692 were less intelligent and not as well educated as their fathers. Many of the original settlers had been graduates of English Universities, while the few educated ones of the present generation came from Harvard, at this time a poor substitute for Oxford or Cambridge. What they lacked in education, however, they made up for in piety and in religious zeal.

The events which disturbed the Rev. Mr. Harris began in the kitchen, where Tituba had been installed as the family cook. Tituba often amused Elizabeth, aged nine, daughter of Mr. Parris, and Abigail Williams, eleven years of age, a niece, with tricks and incantations which she had learned in Barbados. She told the children gruesome stories about spirits and the strange feats they could perform, and kept them in a state of suspense and terror by the frequent recital of these weird stories and by the performance of certain conjuring tricks. Many who have lived in the South as children and have had Negro cooks in the family, are familiar with this experience of childhood.

Several of the children in the neighborhood came to the home of Mr. Parris and witnessed the tricks and incantations of Tituba. These meetings were considered great fun, and the children were thrilled, mystified and often frightened by the Negro slave. Presently, the children who attended these séances began, on their return home, to behave in such a peculiar manner that they attracted the attention

of their elders. The children would walk around, apparently in a trance, climb into holes, creep under chairs and stools, assume odd postures, make unusual gestures and, often speak a sort of gibberish which no one could understand.

After these events had continued for several days, the parents of the children became alarmed and called in physicians. The physicians were unable to diagnose the trouble and told the parents with great solemnity that they were afraid that the children had been bewitched or possessed by the Devil. Having thus placed the diagnosis in the realm of the supernatural, the physicians departed with the advice that the clergy be called. The clergy at that time, although few in number, sat in solemn conclave, accepted the diagnosis of the physicians, and prescribed prayers and fasting.

The news of these events in Salem Village spread rapidly over the countryside. The news reached the Rev. Deodat Lawson, former pastor at the Salem Village Church who, on hearing of the grievous affliction that had befallen Salem, decided to return to his old home, see the calamity himself and give what assistance he could. He was particularly interested because this affliction had befallen the minister who had succeeded him there and also because he had reason to believe, as he wrote, that his wife and daughter, who had died three years previously, "were sent out of the world under the malicious operations of the infernal powers."

Mr. Lawson repaired to the home of Mr. Parris where he was welcomed as a friend and guest. On the day of his arrival, he saw Abigail Williams, the niece of Mr. Parris, have several fits, run frantically from room to room, wave her arms wildly as if she would fly, rush to the fireplace and seizing firebrands, hurl them about the room. Mr. Lawson was dumbfounded by these strange actions and at once expressed his belief that the poor girl was bewitched. This conviction was strengthened by subsequent events which occurred at the divine services which he conducted. During the opening prayer, Abigail had a fit and, as soon as the psalm was sung, she cried out, "Now stand up and name your text." After the Rev. Mr. Lawson had read the text, she observed in a loud voice, "It is a long text." During the sermon, another girl in the congregation shouted that she saw a yellow bird sitting on top of the minister's hat, which hung on a peg in the pulpit. The Rev. Lawson was very much exercised by these events. He did not see how any sane man could doubt that these girls were bewitched and immediately wrote a pamphlet, *A Brief and True Narrative of Some Remarkable Passages Relating to Sundry Persons Afflicted by Witchcraft*. This pamphlet was eagerly read, and the subject of witchcraft was soon on every one's tongue.

Mr. Lawson was not, however, without competition in this field. Indeed, one of his competitors was the most prominent member of the Massachusetts



colony. Some sixty years before, a young English minister, who had been ejected from his church because of his Puritanical views, landed in Massachusetts. This young man, Richard Mather, founded a family here which had such dominant influence upon the history of the colony that we could rightly say he founded a dynasty. An educated man, a former student of Brasenose College, Oxford, he soon became one of the leaders of the new colony. His son, Increase Mather, was educated at the newly established Harvard College, and, after serving for several years as a minister to various congregations, became president of Harvard College. His contemporaries, as well as later historians, regarded him as the most powerful man of his time in the Puritan colonies. His son, Cotton Mather, became even more famous than his father and grandfather.

Cotton Mather was graduated from Harvard College and longed to be president of Harvard as his father had been. Although he failed in this, he had the satisfaction of being chosen president of Yale, an offer which he declined, however. He was a voluminous writer, publishing some four hundred and fifty works on history, science, biography and theology, and his fame soon became international. The University of Aberdeen gave him an honorary degree and the Royal Society of London, then as now one of the leading scientific societies of the world, made him a Fellow. An omnivorous reader,



*Salem Village Church*



an eloquent preacher, and the wielder of a facile pen, he was always well in the forefront of any crusade for civic, sanitary, or religious reform. Such individuals always have their devoted followers as well as their bitter opponents, and Cotton Mather was no exception to this rule.

Cotton Mather is held in grateful memory by the medical historian for his championship of inoculation against smallpox, a campaign which he aided by personal example, as well as by the writing of tracts. The controversy over inoculation roused the people of Boston to such a pitch of frenzy that Cotton Mather wrote of them in his diary, "They rave, rail, they blaspheme: they talk not only like Ideots but like Franticks," and speaks of them as, "a People strangely and fiercely possessed by the Devil." The diary was presumably a confidential and personal expression of the writer's thoughts, but it seems highly probable that the Rev. Mr. Mather expressed them elsewhere as well, since, at the height of the controversy, a lighted hand-grenade was tossed through the window of his house. Fortunately, the fuse became detached and burned out without exploding the grenade. On this occasion, Cotton Mather fought the beliefs, superstitions, and prejudices of the people with a happy result; on another memorable occasion, he supported and encouraged their superstitions and prejudices with a tragic result.

At the early age of twenty-seven, Cotton Mather

saw the publication of one of his books which was destined to have a large circulation and exert a powerful influence upon his fellow townsmen. Mather has been described as having "a talent for sudden composures." He had a habit of writing down rather suddenly certain thoughts that occurred to him, certain events he had witnessed or certain stories he had heard. These scraps of composition he tucked away in a convenient pigeon-hole and after a sufficient quantity had accumulated, drew them forth, pieced them together, and the result was a book. Such was the gestation of his *Memorable Providences*, which appeared in 1689. If the book is really, as some critics assert, a scrap-bag, we may reply in defense that this impression is due to Mather's "talent for sudden composure," and that what the book lacks in unity, it more than makes up for in spontaneity.

The full title of the book is rather long, as was the custom in those days, the first four lines of the title giving the reader some idea of the content and what he might expect. These four lines read: *Memorable Providences, Relating to Witchcrafts And Possessions. A Faithful Account of Many Wonderful and Surprising Things that have Befallen Several Bewitched and Possessed Persons in New-England.* The success of many books, modern publishers tell us, depends largely upon their titles, but these titles must be short. The publishers of other days were not so exacting with their authors. The book was

further embellished with a letter of recommendation "To the Reader," signed by the pastors of all the churches in Boston. This "To the Reader" begins:

The old Heresy of the sensual Sadducees, denying the Being of Angels either good or evil, died not with them.

It continues,

It has also been made a doubt by some, whether there be any such things as Witches *i.e.* Such as by Contract or Explicit Covenant with the Devil, improved, or rather are improved by him to the doing of things strange in themselves, and besides their natural Course. But (besides that the Word of God assures us that there have been such, and gives order about them) no Age passes without some apparent Demonstration of it.

Further, it also notes that,

The Secrets also of God's Providence, in permitting Satan and his Instruments to molest His children, not in their Estates only, but in their Persons and their Posterity too, are part of His Judgments that are unsearchable and His Wayes that are past finding out.

The ministers close their letter by saying,

We Commend it to the Blessing of God, to be followed with the importunate Prayers of us, who have been Eye- and Ear-witnesses of many of the most considerable things Related in the ensuing Narrative.

The book is divided into sections. Section I begins by describing the family of John Godwin, "a sober and pious man," who was a mason and the



father of six children. "Of these Children, all but the Eldest, who works with his Father at his Calling, and the Youngest, who lives yet upon the Breast of its mother, have laboured under the direful effects of a stupendous *Witchcraft*." After praising their parents for the children's training and noting that the children had an "observable Affection unto Divine and Sacred things," Cotton Mather relates that the eldest child, about thirteen years of age, missing some linen, went to see the washerwoman about it. The washerwoman's mother, Mrs. Glover, "an ignorant and a scandalous Old woman," took her daughter's part and "Bestow'd very bad Language upon the Girl," who became indisposed and "visited with strange Fits, beyond those that attend an Epilepsy, or a Catalepsy, or those that they call The Diseases of Astonishment." Soon after, Mather relates, the other children began to suffer similar torments and pains "swift like Lightning" in their necks, hands and backs:

Sometimes they would be Deaf, sometimes Dumb, and sometimes Blind, and often, all this at once. One while their Tongues would be drawn down their Throats; another—while they would be pull'd out upon their Chins, to a prodigious length. They would have their Mouths opened unto such a Wideness, that their Jaws went out of joint; an anon they would clap together again with a Force like that of a strong Spring-Lock. The same would happen to their Shoulder-Blades, and their Elbows, and Hand-wrists, and several of their joints. They would at times ly in a benumbed condition.

We can readily understand how distracted the parents of the children were. They called in Dr. Thomas Oakes who, according to Mather, "found himself so affronted by the Distempers of the children, that he concluded nothing but an hellish Witchcraft could be the Origin of these Maladies." Dr. Oakes was no irregular practitioner, but an eminent physician, who was later speaker of the legislature and a colonial deputy to England.

The parents of the children complained to the magistrates of the woman Glover, who was brought before them and, after some questioning, committed to jail. A searching party went to her hovel and found there several puppets made of rags and stuffed with goats' hair. These objects were brought to the assembly and, when held up, one of the children immediately had a fit.

The trial now proceeded in earnest. A witness testified that, six years before, the old woman had bewitched a certain Mrs. Howen to death, and that Mrs. Howen had seen the old woman come down the chimney to bewitch her. A group of physicians were called to examine the old hag and reported that she was of sound mind, whereupon she was sentenced to death and executed.

The death of the witch did not stop the fits of the children, Mather relates, but rather increased their intensity. "They would bark at one another like Dogs, and again purr like so many Cats." Mather describes their further antics in twenty-one

sections. He took one of the girls into his own home and made what one might call a scientific study of her case, recording her actions and torments in great detail. He relates with unconscious humor, that when he showed her a Jest-Book, she could read it without any disturbance, but that "my Grandfather Cottons Catechism called *Milk for Babies*, and *The Assemblies Catechism*, would bring hideous Convulsions on the Child if she look't into them." Mather finally relates that the demons ceased torturing her and that she recovered, adding, "I am resolved after this, never to use but one grain of patience with any man that shall go to impose upon me a Denial of Devils, or of Witches." Mather's book contains a long postscript describing numerous cases of witchcraft which he had not seen personally, but for whose truth he could vouch.

*Memorable Providences* was widely read and discussed. It was written by a man whose piety and learning were beyond question. The sincerity of the writer and his morbid and exciting account of the prevalence and perils of witchcraft made a deep impression throughout the colony. The elders read the book and discussed it, the children heard their elders, and trembled at the thought of witches. People of the colony, old and young, were convinced that witches were everywhere. Recent events in Salem convinced the inhabitants of this village that Salem had as many, if not more, than its share of witches.

There was no longer doubt in Salem that the girls had been bewitched. It was now necessary to find the witches. The girls were commanded by the elders to name the witches who were tormenting them. Without hesitation, they named Tituba, the Negro Indian servant, Sarah Good and Sarah Osburn. Sarah Good, the wife of a laborer, was described as "a melancholy distracted person" about seventy years of age; and Sarah Osburn, a woman of about sixty, the wife of a prosperous farmer, as "broken down" and "forlorn," the result of continued ill health. All three women were lodged in jail and promptly brought to trial.

Apparently, Sarah Good was an old lady with a sharp tongue and considerable mental acumen. Several neighbors testified that she had a bad disposition, one deposing that Sarah Good had caused the death of her cow. During the trial, one of the girls testified that Sarah Good had stabbed her with a knife and had broken the blade at the time. The girl produced the point of the broken blade to support her story. This testimony produced intense excitement, but unfortunately for the prosecution, a young man arose in court and said that the knife in question was his own, that he had broken it himself, and, to prove his story, pulled the knife from his pocket and demonstrated that the point of the broken blade shown by the girl was really the point of his own knife blade. This entire testimony was then, to use a modern phrase, thrown out of court.

Sarah Good was convicted and sentenced to be hanged, despite her repeated declarations that she was innocent and knew nothing of the whole affair. At the execution, the Rev. Mr. Noyes, minister of the First Church of Salem, said to her as she stood on the scaffold, "You are a witch and you know you are a witch." Sarah Good replied indignantly, "You are a liar. I am no more a witch than you are a wizard, and if you take my life, God will give you blood to drink."

Sarah Osburn's trial was similar, but she was spared the horrors of execution. She was sent to jail in Boston where brutality and harsh treatment proved fatal to the feeble old woman. Tituba was never tried before a court. After lying in-jail thirteen months she was sold as a slave to pay her prison fees.

The people of Salem were now thoroughly aroused. Witchcraft must be stamped out. Twenty-eight persons in this small village were accused of witchcraft and twenty were executed. The records of the trials are a melancholy repetition of the same charges "of torturing the children" and of being witches, followed by a consistent and steady denial. Two of the cases were of especial interest, those of Rebecca Nurse and of the Rev. George Burroughs.

Rebecca Nurse, known as Goody Nurse, was about seventy, intelligent, pious, and kindly. Her standing in the community had always been excellent, and no suspicion had ever sullied her fair name. The

mother of eight children, she was praised by all her neighbors for "her extraordinary care in educating her Children, and setting them good Examples." She was accused of "vehement suspicion of having committed sundry acts of witchcraft," upon Abigail Williams, the niece of the minister, and upon other children.

At the trial, the jury found her not guilty, whereupon the afflicted children made "an hideous outcry." At that moment, another woman, a half-demented creature, who confessed she was a witch, was brought into the court-room. Rebecca Nurse made a remark about this woman being "one of us," referring to the fact that she was a prisoner. The jury, however, interpreted her remark as a confession, and reversed their verdict, declaring her guilty. She was then solemnly excommunicated by the Rev. Mr. Noyes, cut off from the First Church of Salem of which she had been a lifelong and honored member, and condemned to die without the consolations of religion. The governor of the colony granted her a reprieve, but he "was by some Salem Gentlemen prevailed with to recall the Reprieve, and she was Executed with the rest."

The most prominent victim of the crusade against witches was the Rev. George Burroughs, a graduate of Harvard, former pastor of the Salem Village Church and living in peace and quiet at Wells, Maine, when the Salem outbreak occurred. A warrant for his arrest was issued and an order given to



“convey him with all speed to Salem . . . he being suspected for a confederacy with the devil in oppressing of sundry about Salem.” Burroughs was first examined privately by the judges and pastors of the neighboring churches, who brought out the damaging testimony that on one Sabbath he had failed to partake of the sacrament of communion. As soon as he was brought into open court, all of the afflicted children made a loud outcry and had fits. One girl testified that he had carried her up to the top of a high mountain and threatened to throw her down and break her neck, if she did not sign a book he carried with him. Another witness testified that he had seen Burroughs put his thumb into the bung of a barrel of molasses and carry it around, clear proof of his diabolical powers. Burroughs was a man of great physical prowess, as he admitted, but this feat was beyond his strength. Despite his protestations of innocence, he was sentenced to be hanged.

Burroughs was carried on a cart through the streets of Salem to the place of execution on Gallow's Hill. Upon the scaffold he protested his innocence and offered a prayer which “was so well worded, and uttered with such composedness, and such fervency of Spirit” that the spectators were much moved and were ready to prevent the execution. They were also much impressed by the fact that he had closed his petition by reciting the Lord's Prayer, something a witch could not do. At this crit-

ical moment, Cotton Mather, who was mounted upon a horse, addressed the people, declaring that Burroughs was no ordained minister and that they should not forget that "the Devil has often been transformed into an Angel of Light." These remarks apparently appeased the crowd, and the hangman proceeded with the execution. Cotton Mather, in a second work on witchcraft which he called *The Wonders of the Invisible World*, described the trial of Burroughs in great detail, but devotes only two lines to his execution—"But when he came to Dy, he utterly deny'd the Fact, whereof he had been thus convicted."

Sometimes the condemned were executed singly, at other times in groups. It was the latter spectacle that caused the Rev. Mr. Noyes to turn toward the bodies of the victims and cry out fervently, "What a sad thing it is, to see eight firebrands of hell hanging there." These eight "firebrands of hell" were the last victims of the witchcraft persecution. Twenty had been hanged and ten more were awaiting execution when a jury refused to convict some accused witches although the testimony was quite like that in the other cases.

Many of the prisoners were treated with great brutality before their execution. John Proctor, his wife and three children were accused of witchcraft, imprisoned and treated with great severity. Proctor had shown intense opposition to the witchcraft prosecutions and was now, apparently on that account,

treated with especial harshness. His son, William, as Proctor wrote from prison, "because he would not confess that he was guilty when he was innocent, they tied him neck and heels till the blood gushed out at his nose." Twenty of Proctor's neighbors in Salem and thirty in his former home of Ipswich, signed a petition, stating their belief in his innocence and testifying to his good character, but it had no effect. While he was in prison, the sheriff came to his home, seized all of his goods, provisions, and cattle, sold some of the latter at half price, killed the remainder and packed the meat for shipment to the West Indies. Proctor, protesting his innocence, died on the scaffold, requesting, a short time before, the Rev. Mr. Noyes to pray with him and for him, but that worthy gentleman refused, because Proctor would not confess that he was a witch. The fate of Proctor, an ardent opponent of witchcraft prosecutions, had a sobering and deterrent effect upon other like-minded persons.

Sentiment and public sympathy, however, finally began to turn the tide of events. Thomas Brattle, a wealthy merchant of Boston, whose mathematical studies had earned for him membership in the Royal Society, wrote a letter which he circulated privately, in which he denounced the methods of the courts and intimated the accused were innocent. The Rev. John Hale, who "had been very forward in these Prosecutions," changed his views very radically when he found his own loved and honored wife ac-

cused of being a witch. Robert Calef, a native of England and a merchant of Boston, wrote a book on witchcraft called *More Wonders of the Invisible World*, which he was discreet enough to send to England for publication. He wrote that the physicians who were called to see the children of Mr. Parris could not explain the disorder until one of them "having recourse to the old shift, told them he was afraid they were Bewitched." This phrase reveals his own views, which are stated, however, with extreme caution. His book roused the Mathers to the heights of fury. Cotton Mather called the book an "abominable Bundle of Lies, written on purpose, with a Quil under a special Energy and Management of Satan, to damnify my precious Opportunities of Glorifying my Lord Jesus Christ," while his father, President Increase Mather of Harvard College, "ordered the wicked book to be burnt in the college yard." But the countermovement could not be halted. The new governor of Massachusetts, Sir William Phips, issued a proclamation releasing from custody all persons charged with witchcraft, and some one hundred and fifty were set at liberty. The witchcraft epidemic ceased instantly.

There seems to be good evidence that there was soon a wave of resentment against those who had stirred up and directed the witch hunt in Salem. The Rev. Deodate Lawson, whose *Brief and True Narrative* had been such a factor in starting the crusade, left for a permanent residence in England, whence

he wrote later to friends in New England begging for meat, drink, and clothing for his sick and starving family. Cotton Mather, who had played such an important rôle in the witch hunt, did not return to the England from which his ancestors came. Accustomed to storms, he was little disturbed by the controversy which was food and drink to him. He continued to show his "talent for sudden composures"—until, as previously mentioned, they reached the number of 450—meanwhile enlisting his talents on the side of enlightenment in the inoculation controversy some thirty years later.

In the year 1706 the pastor of the Salem Village Church read a confession to his church from Ann Putnam, now twenty-six years of age. Among other statements, she said

...that I, then being in my childhood, should by such a providence of God, be made an instrument for the accusing of several persons of a grievous crime, whereby their lives were taken away from them, whom now I have just grounds and good reason to believe they were innocent persons. . . . And particularly as I was a chief instrument of accusing goodwife Nurse and her two sisters, I desire to lie in the dust, and to be humbled for it, in that I was a cause, with others, of so sad a calamity to them and their families.

Many other similar confessions were made.

It is noteworthy that none of those making confessions and those attacking the witch hunters denied for a moment that witches existed, but denied only

that there were any witches in Salem. Only a hardy and reckless soul would have denied the existence of witches in those days. Nearly a century later, the Rev. John Wesley wrote that the wisest and best men in all ages had believed in witches, and that "giving up witchcraft is in effect giving up the Bible."

The Salem witchcraft episode has been extensively studied by psychologists and physicians. The verdict has been unanimous, "hysteria fomented by religious fanaticism and lying, some possibly of the pathologic type, but most of it malicious." (Potts.) Many of the classic symptoms of hysteria are described by the eye-witnesses of the children's "torments"—convulsions, mimicry, hysterical contractions, areas of complete loss of sensation (described by King James as characteristic of "witch-marks"), sudden loss of voice, sudden blindness, sudden deafness, paralysis, babbling a gibberish, and hallucinations. Hysteria, of course, was known and diagnosed by the Greeks two thousand years before the Salem episode; it is described in the works of almost every medical writer since, but in a Puritan dress and appearing in the Meeting House, its disguise was not penetrated.

The passing of the witchcraft epidemic in New England was coincident with a similar loss of interest in witchcraft by the mother country. Fourteen years later, in 1712, one Jane Wenham, suspected of being a witch, was tried at Hertford before Justice



Powell, described by Jonathan Swift as "an old fellow with grey hairs, who was the merriest old gentleman I ever saw, spoke pleasing things, and chuckled till he cried again." When the tormented girl had a fit in the court-room and a clergyman read the office for the visitation of the sick, Justice Powell remarked "That he had heard there were Forms of Exorcism in the Romish Liturgy, but knew not that we had any in our Church." When Jane Wenham was accused of flying, the justice turned to her and said "You may, there is no law against flying." When the jury convicted Jane, the justice condemned the woman but immediately reprieved her. The last witch trial took place in England in 1717 at Leicestershire, when the accused were acquitted. The Scotch clung to the belief longer, and a witch was executed by burning as late as 1722.

One of the last witch trials in England was the cause of great embarrassment to the trial judge, Sir John Holt. Sir John Holt, lord chief justice of England, because of his fairness, legal knowledge, and unbending integrity, ranks among the greatest judges in the history of English law. As a young man, however, he was wild and dissipated, and on one occasion obtained a week's lodging by promising to charm away an ague from which the landlady's daughter was suffering. He scribbled a few words in Greek on a piece of parchment, bound it around her wrist and told her to leave it there until the fever disappeared. Years later when a judge, an old woman

was hailed into his court accused of being a witch and curing people by the application of a piece of magic parchment which she had received from the Evil One. The judge examined the tattered parchment and saw to his amazement the Greek words he had scribbled on it years before. He told the whole story to the court and the woman was acquitted.

It is probably safe to say that in the twentieth century, most clergymen, in spite of John Wesley's warning, have given up a belief in witchcraft without giving up the Bible. At first the struggle was a difficult one, for, as Richard Burthogge remarked in 1694, while most of the cases were impostures or ignorant and superstitious mistakes, "yet some so well Attested that it were to bid defiance to all Human Testimony to refuse them belief." Indeed, good Bishop William Lloyd was torn by this thought when he urged his clergy to give up their belief in witches. This necessity of throwing overboard such a mass of human testimony has troubled other earnest thinkers. In 1765, Sir William Blackstone, the most famous of English jurists, wrote:

To deny the possibility, nay, actual existence of witchcraft and sorcery, is at once flatly to contradict the revealed word of God in various passages both of the Old and New Testament; and the thing itself is a truth to which every nation in the world has, in its time, borne testimony, either by example, seemingly well attested, or by prohibitory laws.

Father Herbert Thurston S.J., writing in the 1915 edition of the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, remarks:

The question of the reality of witchcraft is one upon which it is not easy to pass a confident judgment. In the face of Holy Scripture and the teaching of the Fathers and theologians, the abstract possibility of a pact with the Devil and of diabolic interference in human affairs can hardly be denied.

At the risk of disagreeing with the learned Father Thurston, modern students of witchcraft explain it without recourse to either "a pact with the Devil" or a "diabolic interference in human affairs." In the Middle Ages, many of the witch hunts on the Continent were simply heresy hunts, and the victims were followers and servants of the Evil One in the person of Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Huss, and Philip Melanchthon. In Scotland of the sixteenth century, many of the witches were simply adherents of the old Catholic faith which had not been stamped out, and their Devil and leader was the Pope at Rome.

Many of the witches were old women, often of a cross disposition, whose sharp tongue and antisocial instincts made them disliked by their neighbors. Some of them suffered from hysteria. The famous witch-marks were not demoniacal but pathological attributes. The insensibility of certain areas over the body was nothing more nor less, as has been mentioned, than areas of anesthesia common in hysteria. Another sure mark of a witch was the presence of

what physicians to-day call supernumerary or extra nipples. Some women—and men as well—have small rudimentary extra nipples below their breasts or upon their abdomens. Some scientists see in these a throw-back to lower animals who possess a row of nipples down the breast and abdomen. The informed man to-day regards such a “witch-mark” as a minor anomaly of no importance whatever, but in the days of witch hunts a woman possessing an accessory nipple might perish on the scaffold since it was a well-known fact that the Devil himself nursed at this nipple. Still another interesting type of witch-mark was due to a condition called dermatographism, an excessive irritability of the skin—when the skin is stroked a welt appears. In some such individuals when the hand is pressed over the back and then removed, a red outline of the hand remains, and later becomes elevated, much like a condition familiar as “hives.” Many persons showing this peculiar reaction were accused by their neighbors of having the mark of the Devil’s hand upon their backs, whereas they have been shown in modern times to be suffering from dermatographism.

The bewitched children of Salem were classic examples of what modern medicine calls exhibitionism. They doubtless developed this peculiar behavior after hearing Tituba talk about magic and conjuring. This phenomenon is still seen frequently. Some of the children were also unquestionably hysterical, and one of the women in Salem, who had

fits of trembling due to witchcraft, was described by one of the witnesses at the trial as a victim of delirium tremens.

The behavior of the people at Salem and elsewhere during the witch hunt was a typical example of mass hysteria, common to all ages and to all countries. It bears a close relationship to war hysteria, a condition which the present generation knows so well.

In many witch trials and executions, however, neither the witches nor the people were hysterical. The motive for the prosecution, especially in England and Scotland, was often political, and witchcraft was a convenient charge. Many of those charged with witchcraft in Scotland were plotting the overthrow of King James. These unfortunate people were like those subjected to the famous water test of the King: if they sank they drowned, if they floated they were burned.

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